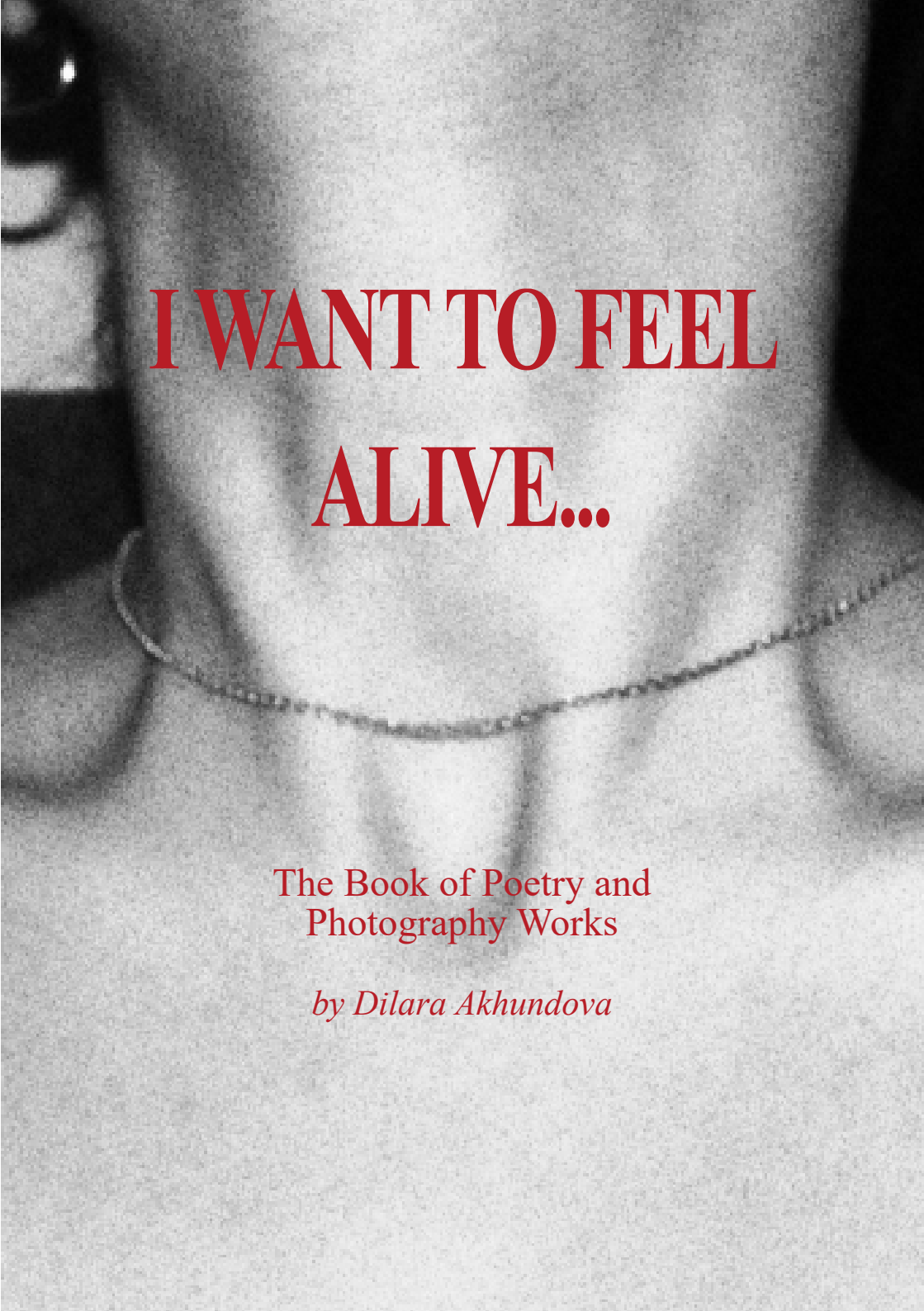

I WANT TO FEEL ALIVE...

The Book of Poetry and Photography Works

by Dilara Akhundova

“I WANT TO FEEL ALIVE...

A Selection of Poetry and Photography Works
by Dilara Akhundova

Warsaw-Baku-Monaco
2019-2023

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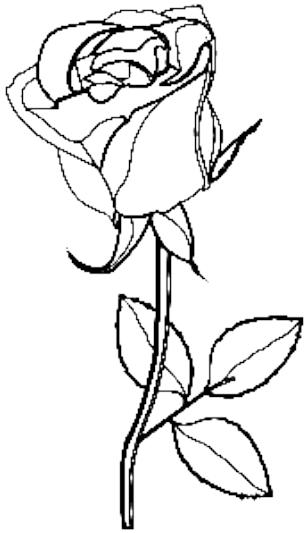
“

In a realm of mercurial promises and loosened integrity, my heart is too big to fit...

In loving memory of our deeply missed and beloved daughter and sister



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About the Author

Nargiz Akhundova
Mother of Dilara

Dear Reader,

This publication is dedicated to the memory of an amazing individual, Dilara Akhundova, whose exceptional character and profound potential defy succinct description. Despite her untimely departure at the youthful age of 20, Dilara left an indelible legacy through her insatiable quest for knowledge, enthusiasm for learning, a robust zest for life, outstanding capabilities, and a luminous soul that comprehended life in depth.

Born in Baku on December 23, 2003, Dilara embarked on her educational journey at the British School, where she spent a decade acquiring proficiency in English, world literature, history, natural sciences, and economics. Simultaneously, she received a comprehensive musical and vocal education, earning a full 7-year diploma in fortepiano. Her prowess extended to chess, achieving the 3rd chess category, and active participation in various chess competitions.

Throughout her academic journey, Dilara demonstrated a penchant for erudition and sports, engaging in numerous football, volleyball, and track and field tournaments. Her involvement in over 25 debate conferences, including MUN, EYP, International debates, Oxford debates, NB models, and more, showcased her commitment to intellectual pursuits.

Dilara's academic pursuits continued at Akademeia High School in Warsaw from 2018 to 2022, where she not only solidified her foundational knowledge but also explored her passion for photography. Her dedication to the art extended to spending hours in the darkroom, refining her technique. In 2022, she graduated with distinction, securing admission to the International University of Monaco (IUM).

While at IUM, Dilara continued to excel academically, drawing on the knowledge acquired from her previous educational experiences. Beyond her academic achievements, she engaged in various extracurricular activities, including volunteer work at Formula 1 events, fashion shows, and charity events.

In December 2022, visiting me in Warsaw, Dilara confided in her poetic talents, expressing a unique genre that incorporated elements of melancholy. Despite her cheerful and positive demeanor, her poetry reflected a distinct artistic expression. Posthumously, her poems were discovered, revealing a depth that had remained hidden from those around her.

In the aftermath of the tragic accident, a decision was made to unveil Dilara's poetic works, aligning with her desire to be heard and appreciated by society. This book serves as a tribute to Dilara Akhundova's enduring spirit, a person who, even in her short-lived physical existence, sought to share love, beauty, and goodness with the world.

About the Author

Aziza Akhundova
Sister of Dilara

Besides being beautiful inside and out, my sister, Dilara, possessed many talents. She was a true philosopher; a trait you'll discover for yourself after reading this book. Dilara played the piano wonderfully, composed music, and wrote lyrics. She had a keen interest in politics and history from a young age, showcasing her intellectual curiosity. Her creativity and imagination blossomed early on, evident in her skill as a photographer. Dilara found immense joy in photography, dedicating hours to perfecting each shot with attention to detail, lighting, and composition. Importantly, she approached all her endeavors with soul and immense love.

In addition to her visual artistry, Dilara left behind a collection of poignant poems that touch the soul. These poems beautifully reflect her nuanced nature, and I hope that each reader will feel a connection to her work, ensuring that Dilara's memory lives on through her wonderful art.

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in April 2021 using a digital camera

About the Author

Olga Baranova
Professor
International University of Monaco

I was among the first professors from the International University of Monaco (IUM) to meet Dilara, as I conducted her online interview in February 2022. I was impressed by her interpersonal communication skills, her maturity, motivation, varied academic interests ranging from corporate law to business and economics, and diverse hobbies ranging from playing chess and volleyball, photography and art, to music through playing piano and singing in a choir. I was also touched by her sincere desire to make the world a better place: she participated in charitable projects aimed at assisting refugee children and promoting women's rights. She was concerned with issues of economic inequality and human rights.

When I met Dilara in person for my course International Relations I was impressed by her knowledge, analytical skills, and ability to approach issues from different perspectives, but what I admired most was her unique ability to combine determination and confidence in her ideas with being humble and extremely respectful towards other people's views and opinions. She was among the first to volunteer for an optional presentation on the pros and cons of globalization providing an in-depth and nuanced analysis of the issue.

For my course Critical Thinking her group made an excellent presentation on the death penalty that was a true hymn to life. Alongside her friends Ayana and Jana, they argued for the abolition of the death penalty, citing its immorality, inhumanity, and violation of human rights (the fundamental principle of the right to life), it cheapens the value of life, serves no purpose to society, and discourages the idea that people can change and grow. I was impressed and pleased by Dilara's critical thinking and presentation skills and the power of her rhetoric.

Every time after talking to Dilara I had a feeling of joy and pride for the new generation. She was such a bright, intelligent, elegant, highly motivated, open-minded, and respectful young lady committed to promoting social causes and making the world a more humane and equitable place.

She was a wonderful addition to our university and will be missed by everyone. At the same time, I feel extremely lucky and privileged to have had an opportunity to meet her, to get to know her better, to teach her, and also to learn from her.

Revealed Thoughts and Reflections

"Two trillion galaxies, billions of stars, eight planets in our solar system orbiting around a sublime sphere of hot plasma radiating energy in order to keep us breathing. 420 billion intelligent civilizations crawled leaving fading traces of their existence on the grounds of our dearest 4.54 billion years old nurturing astronomical originator with seven continents and seas. 7.674 billion people, 195 countries, and a diversity of cultures currently situate under the sky we so meticulously observe. We ought to preserve the belief that our personal problems are large because humankind is a self-centered specie, however, each entity is rather insignificant when taking into account the bigger picture. Nonetheless, I realized that every person must acknowledge their power.

The energy every one of us emits will be returned by the universe like a yin and yang boomerang since we live in the inferno of our own nirvana. Although our multitude may seem insignificant, we caused lots of progress such as technological development. We also left behind a grotesque gruesome series of bloody events in the history of mankind, harming the earth which allows for us to live. Then I could not help but wonder, "Do we really live?". We shall make use of the air our planet provides for us each day and start living to the fullest. None of our concerns will truly help us develop into the powerful and wise beings we shall be. Instead, it is important to live free of unnecessary concerns and find who we truly are at soul. Fall in love with life on an unfathomably profound level, open your eyelids at dawn with a euphoric feeling in your chest making your heart dance to the rhythm of it's beat, sing at the top of your lungs, read literature, make music, draft poems in hope of one day making that your life. Nothing

on this earth limits us from living life like starring in a fabulous movie, and I am designated to make my life a memorable piece of art. I am therefore set on the idea of getting into my dream college not only because I strive to achieve academic excellence but also because college is a period and place for personal growth and I made a pact with life to make full use of all the opportunities given to me at this space and time. I have always held leadership qualities; thus, I plan to live my li fe as a protagonist, willing to do anything in my power to make my dreams realize and desirably and determinately benefit the common good.

Another question that torments my mind is what exactly I can do to benefit that common good in question.

A subject that truly worries me is the stigma formed around mental health awareness. Speaking up turns into ignominy, whilst socially constructed beauty standards turn into deprivation. Having a disorder is labeled crazy whilst struggling in silence is publicly pitied. It is especially most difficult to see the people dearest to you, suffer the most.

I believe that such issues should be normalized, and to do so I plan to open a foundation for those in need. Provide freedom of expression to those who are overwhelmed by their moral heaviness or feel lonely. One's inner world is like the still waters running deep, might be much darker than what appears from the outside, regardless, it all beautiful and fragile. I feel as though it is our crucial duty in the society to make each other feel like we belong somewhere, in the home called earth, designed to be a safe ground. It is my goal to turn this beautiful realm into a place where weaknesses are embraced, and self-awareness is encouraged. By offering a hand to some who deal with such issues on their own, I might ameliorate someone's perspective on life or possibly save a life. Thus, starting a foundation for such cause is pivotal in the process of social normalization and evolvement. Using my own chances to make my best attempts to assist someone is an action which would boost my personal growth most, increasing happiness for others, thereby turning my life into a harmonic melody of art."

Reflections and Thoughts

MEANING OF LIFE

May 2022, Warsaw

"I follow the philosophy of Albert Camus, which advocates that life has no meaning other than that which we give it.

Sisyphus rolled the rock up the hill, informed that it is doomed to slide down, nonetheless the story would have a different perspective is he was happy if one adds definition to enjoying and finding happiness in the process regardless of the final destination, they may spend their life with meaning, acting on their will and determination.

Personally, I choose to give my life the meaning of spiritual growth. I believe that our souls are eternal and live millions of lifetimes, with each teaching us new lessons challenging our integrity and advancing our souls under differing circumstances to ameliorate a sense of a well rounded energetic bloc , thus, throughout our life on earth, taking form in the physical bodies, we as human species should dedicate this journey to reconnecting with our metaphysical energies and letting go of our karmic debts to reach the point of growth and purity, consequently reaching our largest spiritual potential in the longrun".

Reflections and Thoughts

"Where the soul finds peace and the body finds strength. During quarantine I'd love to go to the forest. I'd stay in the gloomy woods with no awareness of the passage of time, where the trees were so tall the sky was barely visible. I'd wander around for hours with music blasting in my headphones, and the world would just go mute. Ranging from David Bowie to Mac Miller. You feel the sublime, as we are tiny puzzles in our giant nurturing universe. I quote "Whereas the beautiful is limited, the sublime is limitless, so that the mind in the presence of the sublime, attempting to imagine what it cannot, has pain in the failure but pleasure in contemplating the immensity of the attempt" said Immanuel Kant.

The scent of fresh grass would make me feel grounded whilst the cold air would make me feel alive. Discovering the deep woods is an equivalent to exploring one's own mind no matter where you turn you will either end up at a new route or run in incessant circles.

Sometimes I'd come across navy lakes by which I would sit, and work on my photography projects inspired by the fairytales of nymphs.

The environment would seem surreal, almost magical. If you listen closely, you can hear the birds sing silent melodies which sound heavenly.

My best friend and I would sometimes go into the woods late at night, when it was pitch black dark outside, not a soul to hear, absolute and total serenity and solitude with the night sky illuminating the vague paths. Surrounding oneself with the warmth of the green is amongst the most mindful activities available. Being in the nature is one of the most beautiful sensations that exist to our kind."

14 March 2023, Monaco

ANNA KARENINA

"My favorite book is Anna Karenina because of the way the writer managed to translate the emotions of the characters to the audience. The story expresses the thin line between love and insanity, how the human nature is designed to make feelings all consuming, how easy it is to get lost in someone, and how far one is willing to go for love, to the point of despair madness and tragedy.

Additionally, it depicts the hypocrisy of our society and the rotten nature of our mentality and double standards."

15 March 2023, Monaco

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in November 2020 using a digital camera

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in March 2022 using a digital camera

Reflections and Thoughts

"I live in an old vacant house, brick on brick, built on neurons with dead skin stuck to its walls..

You atrophied and dusted my vessels. These cells were once shared between us two, with red neon lights illuminating our nights.

The bulbs got dim. The house is vacant. My skin conserved heat from your kisses, now you're just dead skin stuck to my walls. You used to say you miss my body, my lips, my heat before your lids shut as you fall asleep.

The house is no longer inhabited.

With visitors coming through, but no fireplace to make them feel welcome. Pardon my inhospitality. The ceilings meet them with a cold residue, to keep their presence temporary. I only feel at home when I'm at home with you, this home is not a home, just brick on brick built on neurons.

And through the cracks of the tired roof, the wind howls silent melodies:

"I'm unequivocally and irrevocably in love with you."

13 January 2023, Monaco

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in May 2021

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in May 2021

"I think the problem is the comfort zone

When you're together and you feel your worst

You stay because the melancholic bubble turns into home you grow into it

And when you separate you consider going back to that empty home

With broken windows and a dysfunctional chandelier, barely conveying any life

Knowing that you have the prospects of finding someone better who will treat you the way you deserve

Simply because going back is exhibited

You don't have to go through the effort of letting in someone new and unchaining the doors and discovering new inner realms of a stranger

You go back to your comfort zone…

Written in Monaco on the 1st of May 2023, remastered on 22 June 2023 on a plane now during take off

SYMBOLISM OF FOREST

The laws of man, followed in the city, do not apply in forests. The forest would often be used as a place for hiding. Commonly in fairytales, when running away, characters hide in the woods as the forest symbolizes lawlessness.

~~Internationally, the forest often symbolizes being lost, potential danger, mystery and etc. For instance, in children's tales such as in Hansel and Gretel or Alice in~~ Wonderland, characters are drawn to the forest which is inhabited by lurking magical and mysterious creatures, both kind and evil. The enchanted forest is a space outside reality. Certainty and control are lost in the wilderness. Characters in the forest are in danger of losing touch with reality and getting lost in the darkness of the endless trees.

~~Horror films, most frequently use forests to~~ obtain eeriesettings. "In The Blair Witch Project, for example, the forest isused to excellent effect. It's a landscape of increasing disorientation where modern gadgets such as mobile phones fail to work. It's also a place that forces you to experience the full darkness of the night." - Peter Hutchings, professor of film studies at Northumbria University, a specialist in the horror genre. Thus, a forest fits the trope of horror well as it is unpredictable, disoriented, mysterious, and dark.

Dilara Akhundova
17 March 2022, Warsaw

The images were captured by Dilara Akhundova in April 2021

The images were captured by Dilara Akhundova in April 2021

POETRY,
A MIRROR OF THE SOUL

Nara Hodge
Poetess,
Oxfordshire, the UK

Dilara has the rare talent to place the reader within her poems, right in the heart of her poetic world.

She has an amazing ability to actively engage the reader by making them feel every emotion she describes. Her poetic descriptions and use of metaphors are so powerful that the reader feels almost physically engaged in the world within her poems as if they step into her story and become part of it.

Dilara's poetry is mesmerizing, full of melancholy, nostalgia, love, hope, and deeply powerful imagery; her lyrical descriptions are so vivid and evocative that the images that she creates seem to palpitate with life, they feel tangible making the reader want to reach out and touch them.

This is a rare talent and Dilara has it in abundance. She connects with the reader, draws them into her world, and makes them travel with her every step of her poetic journey and feel the love, pain, torment, and hope that Dilara's lyrical heroine experiences in her poetic world.

Much of what Dilara talks about in her poems strongly resonates with the reader. It's a magnificent skill to be able to connect with the reader at such a complex level.

I keep returning to Dilara's poems. Some of them I have read several times and each time I have found a deeper meaning.

Dilara's writing style is deeply emotional, emphatic, sophisticated, and complex; in places it is flowery, but at other times it can be abrupt and concise. However, whatever poetic means she chooses to explore the poetry she has created is poignantly beautiful, vivid, heart-breaking, and utterly mesmerizing. The melancholic tones and emotional outpour in her poems leave the reader with a strong feeling of nostalgia. It leaves the reader wanting more, longing for more of Dilara's poetry.

Dilara paints with words. Her poetry is a piece of art, a painting drawn with words on a canvas of love, hope, and palpable emotions.

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in November 2020

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using an analog camera

POEMS 2023

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in March 2022 using a digital camera

LOVE

I praise the beauty of love
A dual complexity
A paradox of duplicity
It raises you to the heights of Nirvanna and drags you down with infernal speed
Like the velvety sensation of rose petals
And the sound of bees in spring
The scent of the ocean
The heat of your skin
Atonement of sin
Salvation
Pain
Suffocation
For I'm alive
Observing the colors in your kaleidoscopic eyes whilst standing inches away
Platonic connection, physical attraction, soul attachment
Waking up by your side
Thinking
Feeling
Weeping in distance
Laughing from tender tickles

I write my love in letters
Stamps and envelopes
Vowels and syllables
I never send them out
You never see my poetry
My art remains undiscovered
For love is fleeting and people are temporary visitors
My thoughts are eternal
My words live forever

09 March 2023
Monaco

This image was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in February 2022

WITH YOU

I look into your eyes
I can not hide my smile
I feel love rushing through my skin, raising goosebumps
Filling every atom
I'm paralyzed
I feel an intertwining of the northern lights with the milky way
The golden coasts of the Middle East
Religions from all around the world
In your downturned sloping eyes
Emphasized by the dimples when you look into my eyes.
It's like a window to your soul
I feel a warm breath
I feel mirrored
I feel whole
I feel adored
Until you close your eyes and lean for a kiss
I love being the object of your gaze
A sight for a familiar tourist

03 April 2023
Monaco

REPEAT

I was never a fan of repetition
Repeating myself
Repeating my words
Repeating mistakes
“You won’t ever find the same person twice, not even in the same person,” said Darwish
I tend to be followed by repetition
It haunts me
I live in a perpetual loop
Like speeding rounds in races with no target
I repeat
We restart
We re-end
We end
I end
The end

12 May 2023
Monaco

I FEEL

I feel like I’m going insane

An overwhelming dinging noise keeps cracking up my skull from the top of my head down the back of my neck
A hurricane of change takes over in split moments
Death and regeneration consecutively overlap
Don’t leave
Please don’t leave
Don’t leave me
Now leave me alone
I want to be alone
Always stick by me
Always alone
Never lonely
Lonely with you
I don’t feel happy
I don’t feel sad
I don’t feel present
I don’t feel lost
I don’t feel
I feel it all
I feel it all too much
I want to stop feeling
I want to feel
I want to feel alive
I want to escape
I want to leave my head
I want to be at peace
I want to be with you
I want to feel myself
I want to feel like me again

12 May 2023
Monaco

POEM FOR KHALID

Eternal whistles howl through the tulip fields, with a single daisy haunting the ground

Living life in shades of blue

Like a momentous blur, I seize a frown

Kisses of the memories

Hold me back in time

Ashes of love once burning hot

Leave me chained to a vacant house

Immortal contemplations fill me up with grief

Dead ends are a new opening, to living life in peace

“Drink wine. This is life eternal. This is all that youth will give you.”

Cried out Khayyam

So little time in everlasting infinite seconds

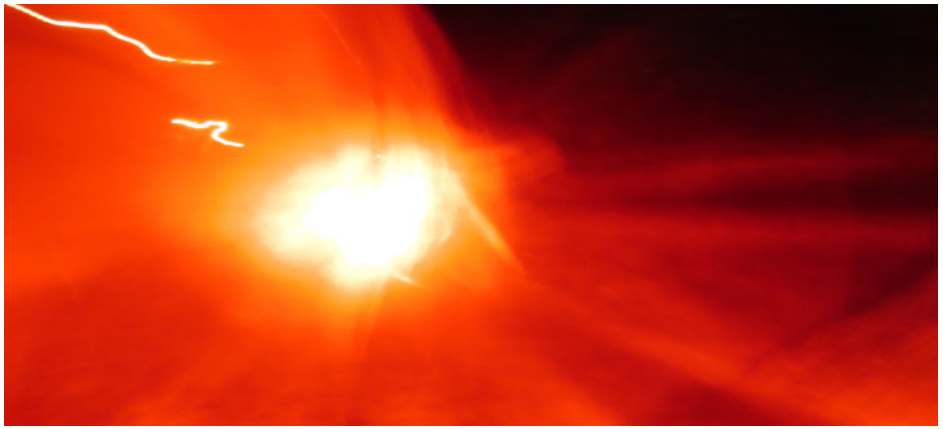
The moon has never shined so bright

Adolescent laughter, bloom, the stars

All that’s left of heaven

Gently whispered Dante, as a sedative for the merciless late sleepless nights

10 May 2023
Monaco



The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in March 2022

INSPO

I fall down and down the abyss
Until my lungs cannot produce a scream
And my eyes can't shed a tear
Oh Alice, What's a Nice Kid Like You Doing in a Place Like This?
Where the rabbits are not who they seem
They trick you
And the mad hatter becomes relatable
Empathetic
Nurturing
A reflection
In a world of holographic illusion
If I pinch my skin, why am I still here?
If I hold down a candle, how am I still dreaming?
A surreal world
Or a dream of blur?

11 April 2023
Monaco

8AM POEM POSTCLUB NIGHT

At a constant search of an unreachable enigma
You can't come too close to the sun.
Sometimes I feel as though I'm about to catch it
But it fades away in infinite seconds
If I were to grasp it, I'd lock it in a cage like the hummingbird of Hafez
But the waves seem to drag it away, with their silent melodies at the shore
Once I feel it beat within me, it pumps my vessels
A state I've never felt before
May it not fade
I hope it doesn't fade
But it does
It always fades
I want to drive away
And cross realities at the traffic lights
Turn into a hummingbird at a sanatorium
But I must stay
Although I feel chained
In a distortion of the Leviathan
I live life like a blur
It's a sedative
Incessantly trying to reach the moon
But the earth rotates the other way round
When I do feel like in space
I come to learn that I'm simply walking on ash
The moon does not exist

23 April 2023
Monaco

THE SEA

The cold
It drowns me
It comes in waves
Drawing you further from the shore with every acceleration
It separates until it's inescapable
Until it's irrevocable
And the more you resist it, the further it pulls you in until you suffocate under the unbearable weight of its burden, like being tugged to pieces by subaqueous sirens or beggars grappling for bread
These thoughts come in violent billows
They're cold
They can flood sanity.

On a Tuesday the blazing sun may appear
And the sound of the velvety waves may sound like a joyful ensemble of memories, a symphony of peace
May even appear soft and nurturing
A sedative by which I beg for salvation
It's a disaster in disguise by dark
The water starts raging
The ground turns indiscernible
The depth amplifies the fiend in the heart
The noise gets so thunderous your eardrums adjust to its rhythmic vibration
It gets so lightning you can feel them exploding with every infinite second
My thoughts feel like the shore at 6 pm dusk
Placed on a perpetual loop
Never too sunny, and despondent enough
to predict the tsunami seconds away

No serenity of mind, a constant anticipation in trepidation
A lifelong wait for the water to take me away to the horizon,
as the sky gets bluer, and the familiar cold becomes tolerable,
almost natural, the water goes still and silent,
you no longer feel the famine and sickness,
you simply run deep.

27 February 2023
Monaco

SEPARATION

A string of fortune
Unfortunate or provident
Cursed or blessed
Spending time in a guarded cage or a tempestuous blur
Must the provisional be denied or shall you live through a full spectrum of passion due to the transience of living
Knitting a blanket to preserve warmth through atomic attachment to reach a breaking denouement
Entwining in infinite seconds to find them evanescent
Can I allow closeness or should I shut down?
Intimate space turns into a dent in the mattress outlined by the ghost of one's body
Embrace the vagueness of felicity for an obscure outcome or keep the routes undiscovered?
Turn one into an eventually abandoned home or roam around the solar system?
If the purpose is to feel, why is pain inescapable?
In a realm of mercurial promises and loosened integrity, my heart is too big to fit.
Eliot called for the fire sermon
I question the stars, exquisite attachment, and unequivocal detachment
It can be beautiful, it can be tormenting
I feel it beneath my skin.

22 February 2023
Monaco

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in May 2021

“Dilara, I’ve always known you as a burning star. You lit up every room with your energy, kindness, talent, and your ability to make someone feel loved and seen. Your creativity, spirit, and love for life were truly remarkable. Every little clip of you I watch fills me with both fascination and sadness, as I realize I didn’t experience enough of your soul and your beauty. You were my kindred spirit. I wish we could have shared more adventures, conversations, and time together. I will keep you in my heart in moments of joy because I know how much you loved joy, celebration, and life. You live and burn inside all of us. You are alive in all of us....

AIDAN IMANOVA
A journalist and editor
and the features director
at Architectural Digest Middle East

POEMS 2022

POEM

I hear them crawl all night

Through the absurdly miniature canals

The spiders sewing their kaleidoscope protruding webs which ensnare paranoia

The tiny bugs with long whiskers that give you chills down your bare, exposed spine

The ants carrying the weight of woe and despondency

The sensation of a caterpillar slowly paving its way, as though gliding on the nightly trepidation

The sound of a cricket imitating the fading heartbeat

If you listen closely

One two One two One two

Why can't I hear the following one?

Perhaps the noise of the earwig insect deems reality,

All I hear is a droning noise, twisting my

thoughts into one blob, whilst the world goes mute

If you focus scrupulously, you may hear the buzz of a dying light bulb

That bulb maintains solitude in my solidarity

You must not listen for too long or it will make you go insane

I approach with caution, thus, compos mentis

I hear them crawl all night

Oh… they live inside my head.

21 August 2022
Baku, Azerbaijan

POEM

You made me feel weak

I used to overplay scenarios in my head

Sitting in the bath

Of how I tell you how much damage you've caused me

Of how at pain you've left me be

I have no desire or intention of doing that no more

You're dead to me

I hated being around you cause you made me too soft

I felt so full I wanted to die

When you'd leave my heart would burst a million times a second

You made me feel weak

I was too soft

You're dead to me

08 August 2022
Baku, Azerbaijan

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in May 2021

POEM

The stone keeps on rolling down my bones

Day and night

My flesh carries the weight of authority

Like the incessant, unbreakable ritual of the spirit of Sisyphus crawling through my tissues

Duty has been installed in my wires

Expectations paving their route through my collarbones

Who am I to disappoint?

What a foolish question, as the notion must not exist

My blood boils as I can't abscond the identity inflicted on me since birth, like my prophecy engraved in my skin

Miles of it

Self-fulfilling it seems

Lifetime of walking on thin ice, I won't survive to disillusion perfection, purgatory must be disguised

I was born to be this way: sane, rational, and brave

The one to guide the way

I am unable to fail as disenchant is not who I was sculpted to be from clay

No contentions are obeyed

Instead, I dismiss and avoid

How can I lose control if there is no more impedimental game?

But who am I racing with by battling the burden in my brain

My dark reflection enslaving me to this print

My mother would always whisper before bed:

Stay in charge, you are the strength and sagacity of the lineage

Fortitude and acumen became my forte

Such grand proclamations addressed to a 4-year-old box of anatomy of cells, with two legs and two hands and a smiley face

03 July 2022
Marbella, Spain

POEMS 2021

The photograph was captured and processed by
Dilara Akhundova using an analog camera

POEM

As My vision turns blue and deluded in the fog of my thoughts
I lay my head down the cold sheets left behind by your absence
Your body outlined on the mattress of a mirage
I wanna reach out but your voice no longer reverberates back in the corners of my room

I still remember the sensation of your tender touch against my skin
As your fingers would wander around every inch
And if you'd dig harder with your claws and fangs I'd bleed my feelings out
Unravel what's within my heart along with my tired flesh and shaken bones
Drop my disguise like a cloak I wear to hide my sinful thoughts
All the roses you gifted were painted black and full of thorns
But I would not shed a tear
For I would bleed myself out to see your face, feel your love again

09 August 2021
Baku, Azerbaijan

POEM

My heart is a ghost town
With a thunderstorm clapping all day and wolves howling all night long
Unsheltered dogs roaring till I rot while
Rats eat me up alive
No sun shines bright but the pale moonlight
My capillaries are like the empty hollow streets that were once filled with people and life, turning dull with no street light

My veins are filled with cold ashes of love once burning hot
My tissue is the river of empty promises that never last
My arteries are abandoned buildings once inhabiting long nights of memories now crawling all around the town sunk in trepidation to survive
My heart feels deadened but it's still beating
The rhythm of its pump once sounding like a melodic violin goes slower until it's silent
Can you hear it?

Until it is another ghost disappearing into the abyss six feet under infecting the ground with tumor in
Until it is another ghost disappearing into the abyss six feet under infecting the ground with tumor in the neighboring towns
Howcome does one scream in pain so loud until it all goes numb

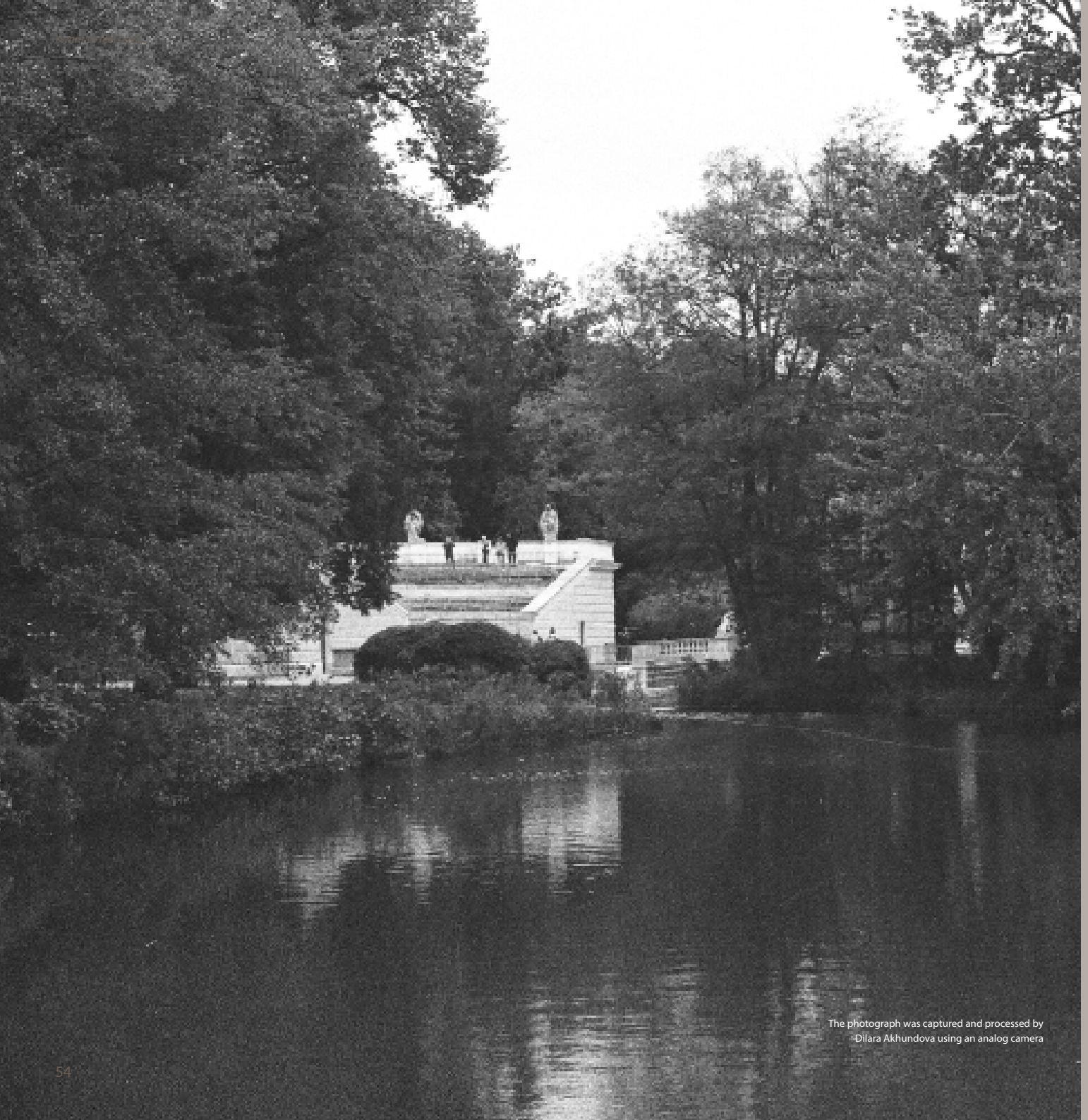
09 August 2021
Baku, Azerbaijan

POEM

Your infectious smile pollutes my veins
Causing tumor like the plague
With soft melancholy inhabiting my lungs
Your deceptions tear my soul apart
Like beggars pulling you from each side

09 August 2021
Baku, Azerbaijan

The images were captured by Dilara Akhundova
in April 2021 using a digital camera



The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using an analog camera

POEMS 2019 2020

INSPO

The whole world is twirling
It's just you and me
The whole world is turning
And we're swirling in
Spinning in a loop
You're all I feel
The sky may be trembling
You're still all I see
Laying down in these neon lights
The stars all around, an empty fog folding
Mysterious and haunting
The time starts to pass slowly
We're alone in an eternal freeze
Arm in arm
Your skin starts to get warmer
Connected by atom like in ecstasy
I feel your breath
With my every inch
The world begins to be so surreal
The ceiling is blurring
I hear your heartbeat
Won't release your hand
My heart pumps in sync
The world becomes brighter
Alone in the universe
Thoughts become silent
Feelings become heightened
A homeless man just intruded
The world is getting colder
Your hearts are getting warmer.

2020 Warsaw, Poland

IMAGINE THERE WAS NO TOMORROW

Imagine there was no tomorrow
You'd spill the one you love your feelings
You'd talk through arguments so old
You'd open up about your fears
Hidden deep inside your soul
Imagine there was no tomorrow
You'd make the first move you swore you'd
Never do
You'd make up with someone from past
Who's loss from your life you deeply regret
Imagine there was no tomorrow
You'd tell the ones you hate your loathe
Solve everything you'd like to solve
Speak up discomforting ideas
And talk through all your brutal thoughts
Imagine there was no tomorrow
You'd free your heart from all the locks
Won't bother your soul, keeping a wall
Live life with no regrets, just openly and freely
Something people tend to forget
Is that there might be tomorrow
Imagine there was no tomorrow
You'd do the things you keep yourself from doing
Just today, this night , this time
Feel relieve, and freedom, and calmness
So why not live today like it's only now to live.

30 August 2019
Warsaw, Poland

LYRICS ABOUT YOU

My thoughts can fill an ocean but I only say a word
Why express myself when you'll tell me I am wrong
to feel this way— gaslighting telling me to stay
You're telling me I'm distant whilst you're digging knives through me
Soft-like kisses left scars on all your empty-word delusions

In you I lost myself, it took you to be gone to find me again
My heart burns for you like a red candle
My demons cry/howl for you every night
Electric dreams all consumed and paralyzed

Stuck in a space with no escape,
I found myself in your mind games
Consumed by your cruel intentions
I won't give you my affection

You'd tell me that I'm the first you've met
Who shared your thoughts and your regrets?
You lied you've never felt this way
Well ride together till our death

You change your face from day to day
Now I feel as though we are burning in flames
But then we stand two feet apart,
Bits of you wash away with pain

Depressant disguised in a heart shape
Memories of you run through my veins
Cupid's chemical addiction
From peaks you fade into a nightmare

Crashing slowly in melancholic space
Convince me I'm at fault when you lie over the bend
You make me feel like time does not exist
You'll hear your screams that echo reverberate from me

Why do I put up all these walls?
They practically built me up a home
I'd never tell you what is wrong
You'd play this out to be my fault

I feel as though you still live in my system
Farewells are tough but it's harder when I'm with you
You make love sound like such an empty word
When all you ever did was wrap it up in hurt

Now you miss me, beg to call
I will not fill your void
Not a saint nor a sinner
Dial me up but all you hear is the sound of your own heartbeat

My soul lives in dark colors
You'd tell me that;

It's all in my head
I'd burn for you every night

Your silhouette remains engraved
In my inner world from day to day
Moving on a mile away
You're still dragged into my days / you still tag along into my days

Have we taken it too far?
You still seem to be all around
In every story, view, and dream
You're the first I think about

I feel your absence every day
Colors change as seasons range
I still feel like you're all around
In every smile and every ache

Trying to mourn someone alive
Everyone spreading white lies
That time will heal and you'll be fine
Then why does time not end this fight?
Attachment, abandonment, soul entanglement

Feelings rot inside my mind
Haunted by how it was at start
Moving on or forgetting is a hopeless fight
Like wishing on a shooting star

You drain me out
With your constant accusations
Until there's none of me left
I don't recognize us anymore
The scars don't seem to fade

Buried you every night I cried
Lost in the void of your absence

Pinching fire between my finger
To feel less outbursts on the inside
Conceal all the cracks and burns you left behind

It's a paradox
Our bond has no reason
Why am I bound?
To someone so different

You keep complaining I'm dismissively avoidant
But you've done nothing to prove that you're secure
With every word you make me shut down even more

Stockholm syndrome

2 September 2022
Baku

SONG LYRICS

Leaving feels too tiring
Staying feels like a stray
Why does this paradox
Keep living in my brain

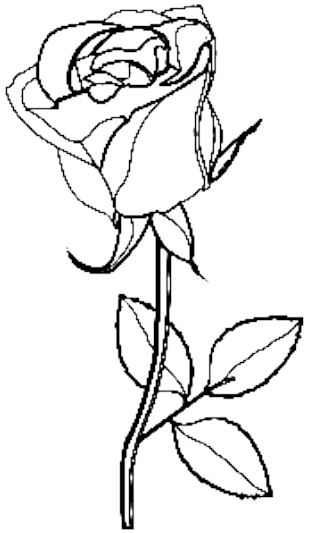
Cupids chemical attachment
Haunts me day by day
You're so distant I wanna see you
But this feels like a game

Not worth lighting the candles
I've got so much to go
But not having you press against my lips
Does not seem like reality

We lived for the stolen moments
Unraveling in infinite seconds
But living in the present
Is the only way to make it?

Overthinking and sinking in emotions
Makes living feel so heavy
But our journey is so temporary
I've only got one life, gotta face it

8 March 2023
Monaco



PHOTOGRAPHY WORKS

Savannah Du Quercy
Artist
London, United Kingdom

The series of photographs by Dilara Akhundova, who tragically passed away recently in her twenties, offer a poignant reflection of her passion for life and photography.

Having studied in Monaco, Dilara's artistic journey was deeply influenced by her exposure to diverse cultures and landscapes. Through her lens, Dilara embarked on a captivating exploration of both internal and external landscapes, leaving behind a legacy that continues to resonate with many of us.

In her compositions featuring people, Dilara Akhundova delves into the complexities of identity and human experiences with a remarkable depth and sensitivity. Her playful overlapping compositions hint at inner struggles and the multifaceted nature of individuality, inviting viewers to contemplate the intricacies of the human condition. Through careful framing, staging and nuanced expression, she fosters introspection and empathy, weaving narratives that explore universal feelings.

On the other hand, Dilara's landscape photographs provide moments of serene contemplation, offering a meditative appreciation of the natural world she so dearly loved. These images capture the beauty and tranquility of nature, inviting viewers to immerse themselves in the calming embrace of the outdoors. Through her landscapes, Dilara Akhundova invites us to pause, breathe, and reconnect with the world around us, highlighting the restorative power of nature amidst the complicated relationships we can face with ourselves and with others.

Despite the visual differences between her series, Dilara's photographs provide profound insights into her world, reflecting her love for life and her deep connection to both humanity and nature. Through her photography, Dilara continues to inspire and uplift, reminding us of the beauty that surrounds us and the importance of embracing both our inner and outer landscapes.

THE ROUTE

I decided to shoot my scenes at the Station Museum in Warsaw as I wanted an abandoned setting. My friend (Pola Zaremba who agreed to model for the shoot) and I got to the location within ten minutes by car. The route was easy as the station is located in the city center and is easy to find.

I had access to an empty non-functioning railway station, which added an uncanny sensation of man-made infrastructure having no man around. The vacancy made the scene appear apocalyptic.

Dilara Akhundova

These images were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in February 2022

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Dilara Akhundova in February 2022

REFLECTIONS

I like my digital photos as they portray the subject in a distorted mean, appearing out of nowhere in a forest which seems like a sublime location due to the grandiosity of nature. The movement is blurry due to the slow shutter speed which makes the setting even eerier based on the factor of unpredictability. The scene is dark as it was captured in the middle of the night, with a bold red light illuminating the silhouette, which insinuates the evil connotations and turns the images surreal through the rays blurring out the figure and making it look as though it is supernaturally exuding fire in the middle of the woods.

My problem arose with the analogue photos as they turned out to be much darker than anticipated. I trusted them to successfully have the same effect but with a certain graininess due to the film, making the images look older, increasing the uncertainty as it would be difficult to estimate when the film was shot, making my work timeless. However, the photos turned out to be a failure as they were overexposed. I tried adjusting the settings to brighten up my images and make them more defined, but that didn't work, thus, I will stick with my successful digital photos as my final piece.

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in March 2022 using a digital camera

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in May 2022 using a digital camera

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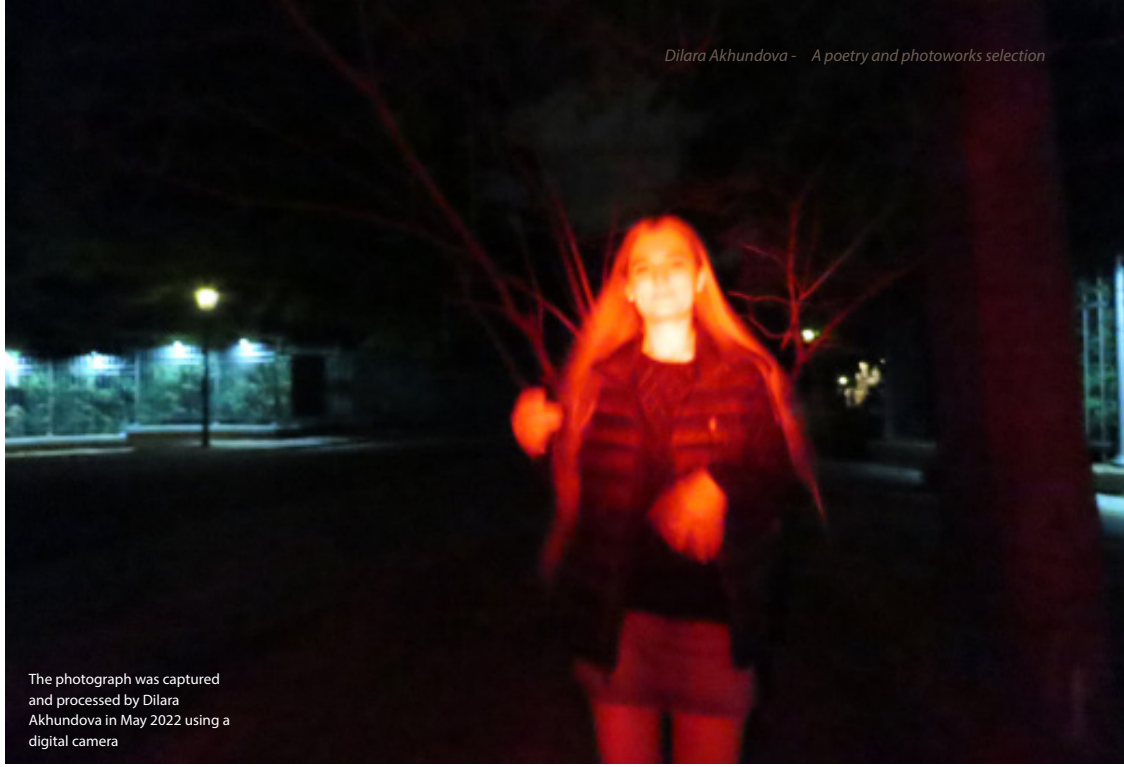


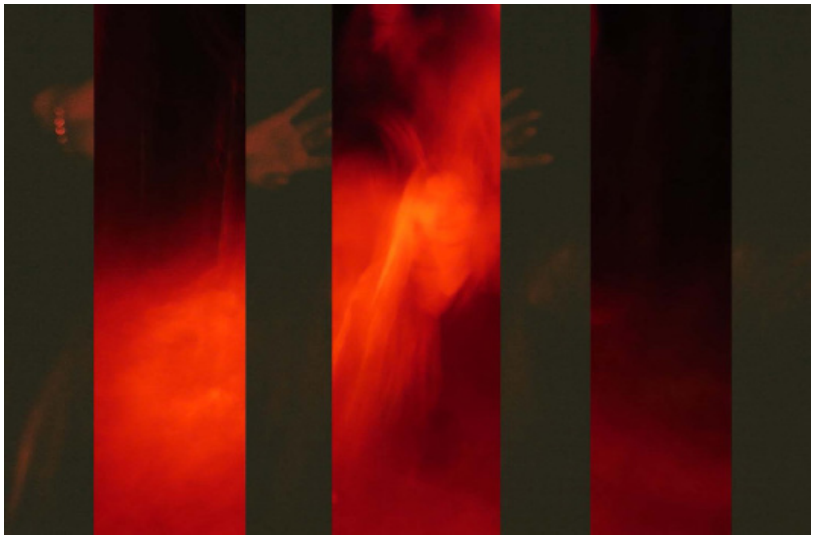
The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in May 2022 using a digital camera

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in May 2022 using a digital camera

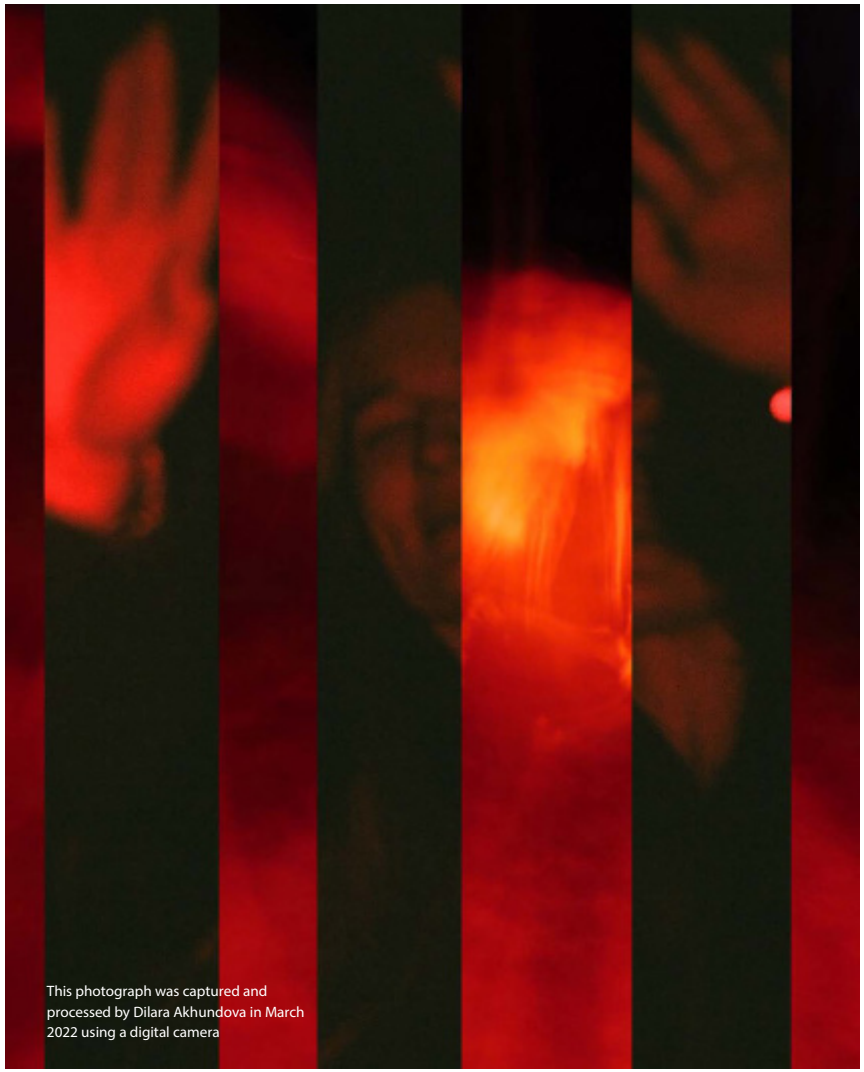
OBSERVATIONS

At first, I decided to rip my digital and analogue photos into strips and align them together to form a collage. You can see the comparison of the setting as well as the movements in the images. For instance, in the first collage it seems as though the subject is raising both of her hands hiding away from the viewer, however, those are two separate shots combined.
I proceeded to collage the images digitally and experiment with different scenes. I like the outcomes as the photos look alike in terms of the composition yet are so different in regards to the exposure, texture, and dullness/brightness of color.
The vividness of color and clarity of the figure proves that I prefer the digital shots over the analogue ones as they feel more disturbing and eyecatching.

Dilara Akhundova



These photographs were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in March 2022 using a digital camera



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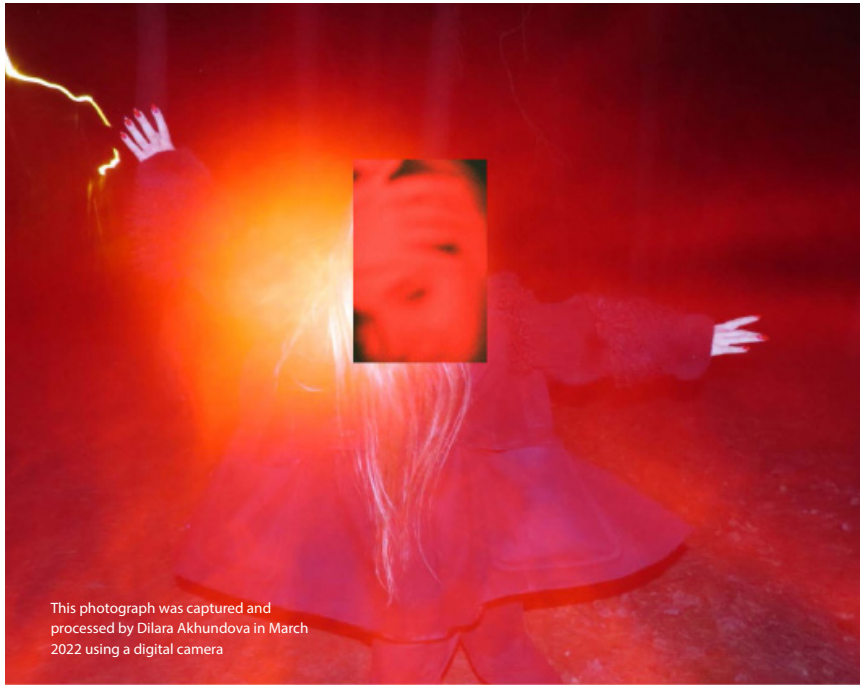
> “...The vividness of color and clarity of the figure proves that I prefer the digital shots over the analogue ones as they feel more disturbing and eyecatching.
>
> Dilara Akhundova



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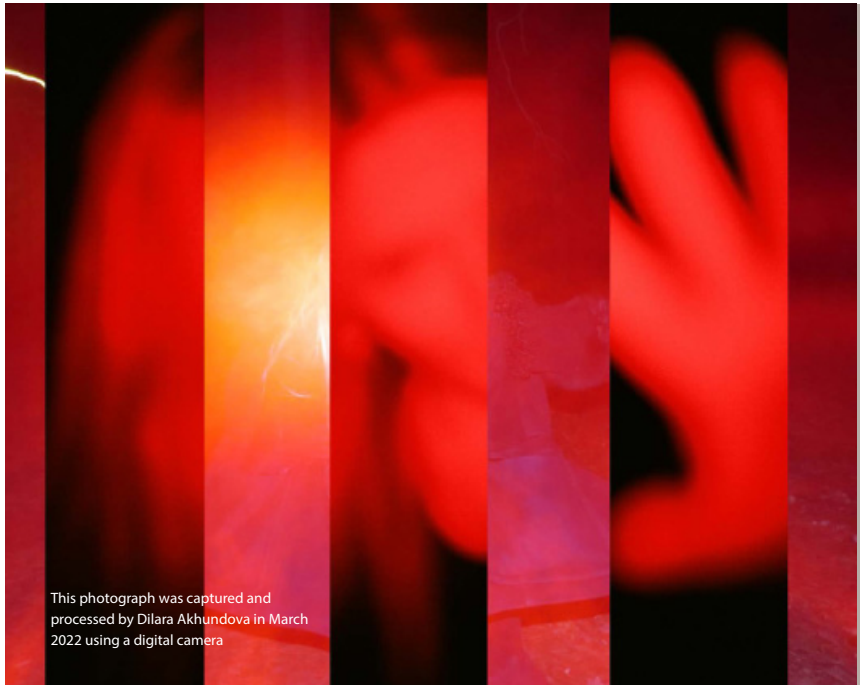

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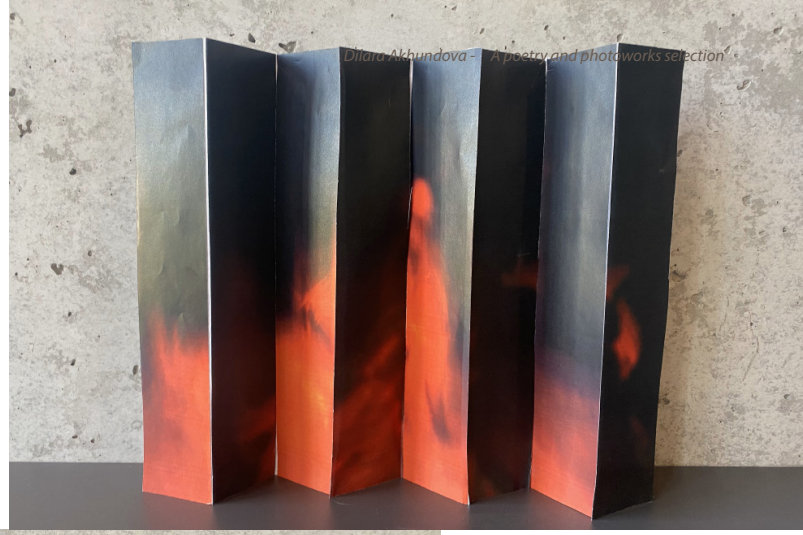
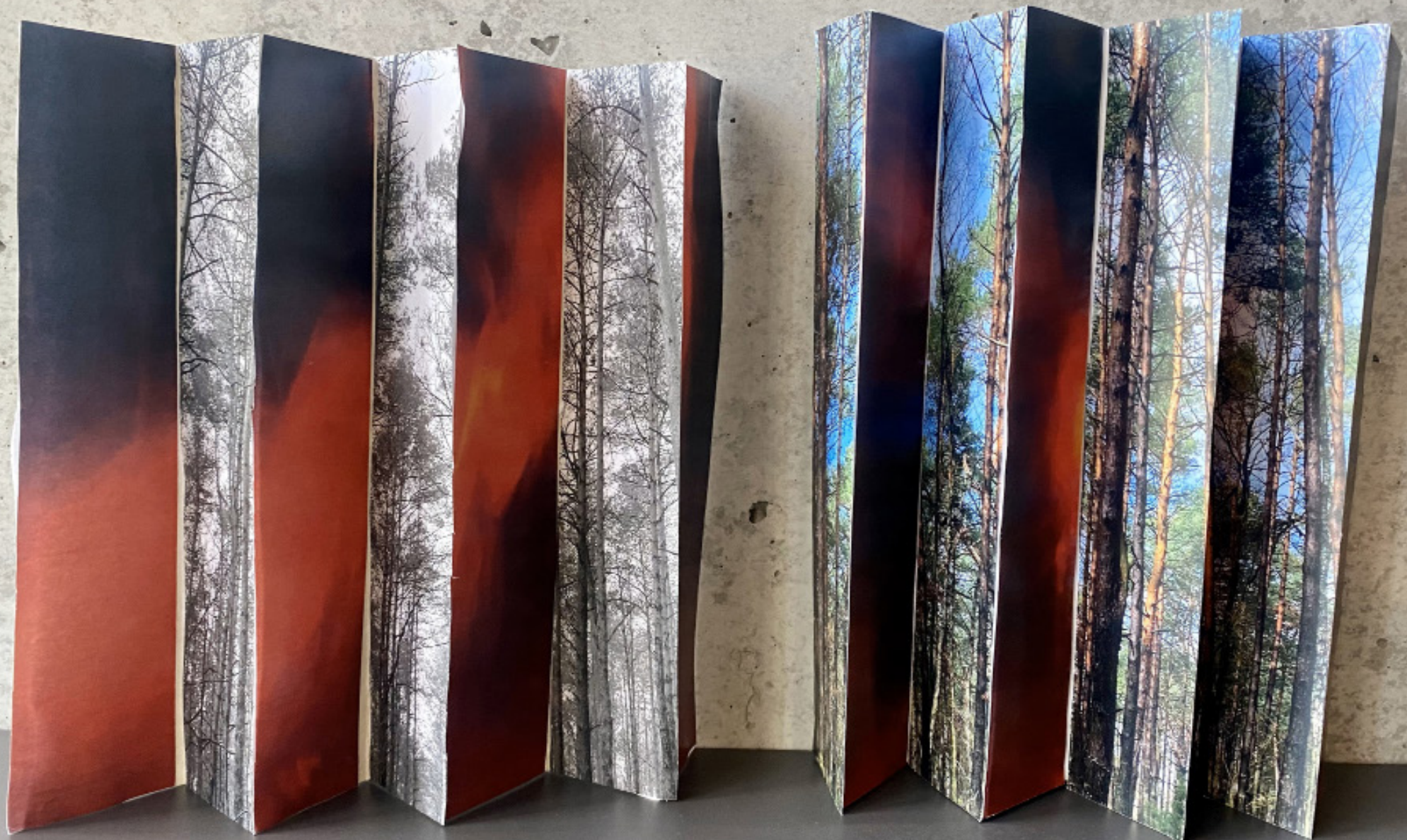


Collage by Dilara Akhundova



Collage by Dilara Akhundova

PERSONAL STUDIES

HOW IS COLOR AND LIGHTING USED IN HORROR FILMS TO CONVEY THE EMOTION OF FEAR ON THE BASIS OF 'INSIDIOUS: THE LAST KEY' (2018), 'SUSPIRIA' (1977), AND 'A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET' (1984)?

DILARA AKHUNDOVA

09 September 2021 - 29 April 2022

Horror is a widely known genre of narrative existing since the late 1890s, which aims to inflict fear and terror on the audience. Horror movies are one of those which give you chills running down your spine, inhabiting your thoughts after contemplating. This genre is a timeless melody as it fills the voids that aren't filled in daily life, stimulating a sense of buzz. On this note, I realize how much of a significant impact horror films have on the human anatomy. They evoke fear in the amygdala, releasing dopamine and adrenaline. They precipitate heart rate which boosts energy. Most tranquil scenes happen to be the build-ups to scare jumps like the still waters running deep. In order to inspect the visual analysis used to obtain the horror aesthetic, I chose to focus on certain scenes of three top-tier horror films in this investigation. Starting off with 'Insidious: The Last Key (2018)' depicted with profoundly prevailing darkness and underexposure increasing the feeling of unpredictability for the viewer as they do not know what waits ahead, reaching 'Suspiria (1977)' filmed in bold colors communicating emotions as scarlet is dominating the color palette, adding grotesque tension with it's eye-catching nature and evil connotations, finishing with 'A Nightmare on Elm Street (1984)' where uncanny tones of blue and red contrast dreams and reality symbolizing danger and sanity. As Pablo Picasso said, "Colors, like features, follow the changes of the emotions."[1], in my opinion, the most important factors of the visual analysis are colors and lighting as colors are metaphors that carry their own messages, and lighting sets out the atmosphere of the scene. In this study, I will be exploring such themes as I plan to incorporate them into my personal project of shooting disoriented silhouettes in empty spaces with the illumination techniques and hue palettes taken from the films to paint the setting in tropes of horror.

When asked why people are scared to sleep the night after watching a horror film, the most frequent response seems to be that many are scared of the dark, of what might ensue after they shut their eyes. "How does the usage of darkness have such a strong impact on the viewers?", I always wondered to myself. Analyzing 'Insidious: The Last Key', I noticed that the focal trope of the movie, is underexposure.

During the safe episodes, the scene is set in daylight. Light is known as an ancient symbol for understanding one's thoughts and surroundings. It is the opposite of sinister darkness. Nonetheless, even the light in this film has a blue

1 Color Psychology: Does It Affect How You Feel? How Colors Impact Moods, Feelings, and Behaviors, May 2020, by Kendra Cherry, Verywell Mind

tint. Blue can remain frightening as it is scientifically proven that blue light makes the scene appear cold because ultraviolet light rays on a high frequency don't seem warm, thus may be associated with the cool temperature. Human bodies simultaneously also become cold when frightened as the blood gets redirected to the heart and muscles in order to run from danger, which leaves a cold sensation[2]. This coolness reflects on the fright maintained throughout the film, because although the daytime scenes are expected to be plain, there is unease.

The fear of the dark has manifested over the centuries in the human psyche, as a passed down will of our forbearers. Researchers have found that this fear derives from our history of ancestors' survival skills. Due to humans being on top of the food chain, they had to be cautious of the predators who would come out to hunt at nighttime behind the veil of the dark as that is when our eyesight is the weakest and humans are the easiest to prey on[34]. As discovered by researchers at the University of Toronto, over time, this behavioural response of feeling at threat in the dark has turned into an instinct which we inherit within our subconscious till this day as anxiety[56].

2 What Happens to Your Body During the Fight or Flight Response? December 2019, Cleveland Clinic Health Essentials
3 There's an Evolutionary Reason Why We're Afraid of The Dark, February 2016, by Josh Hrala, Science Alert
4 Why We're Afraid of the Dark (and Why It's Good That We Are), October 2013, by Andrew Tarantola, Gizmodo
5 As in footnote 2
6 As in footnote 3

As Elise Rainier, the protagonist in 'Insidious: The Last Key', walks forward inward the dark, she is terrified by the unclear danger[7] formed by the lack of stimuli[8], as the visual senses lose their function, which are meant to protect us from harm. The terror of the dark is a reflection of the fear of the unknown as when one's environment is incomprehensible, their imagination tends to construct the possible surrounding[9]. In 'Insidious: The Last Key', half of the events take place in the dark because besides the script, the mind of the viewer is meant to make up frightening objects in the awaiting moments of the upcoming events . Therefore, underexposure and the tint of lighting play a crucial role in awakening an alarming feeling within the viewer through the play of the psyche.

In reference to the eminent underexposure present in horror films such as in Insidious, I would like to analyze the work of a fine art photographer Michael Massaia, who happens to be a victim of the anxiety disorder discussed earlier. He suffers from insomnia, thus he would often go for night strolls around his native New Jersey photographing the ghostly nature of a commonly busy space once the streets are left abandoned in the late hours[10]. The artist is known for capturing isolation and disconnection in the haunting sights of his ordinary surroundings. One of his most famous New York collections is called 'DEEP IN A DREAM - CENTRAL PARK - 2008-2019', which is produced in silver platinum prints, exposed between 2 to 5 AM.

7 HORROR MOVIE AESTHETICS: How color, time, space and sound elicit fear in an audience. May, 2016, thesis presented by Xiangyi Fu to The Department of Art + Design, Information Design and Visualization Northeastern University, Boston, Massachusetts
8 How Horror Filmmakers Succeed (and Fail) at Using Darkness in Their Movies, March 2020, by V Renée, No Film School
9 There's an Evolutionary Reason Why We're Afraid of The Dark, February 2016, by Josh Hrala, Science Alert
10 Michael Massaia, artsy.net

Massaia's images are shot in darkness with the night sky and street lamps brightening the field of vision. The emptiness of the sights seems apocalyptic to me, lifeless. The lack of life and light make the photographs appear like the end of times, which is indeed terrifying.

Inspired by Michael Massaia's photographs, I decided to shoot some images of my own on a film camera. I went to a park in Warsaw at around 7 AM, with not a single soul in sight. In response to the 'DEEP IN A DREAM - CENTRAL PARK - 2008-2019' I photographed a pond surrounded by large trees and bushes. I produced the image (on the left below) in high contrast, with the plants and water underexposed which adds to the scare of the unknown — the viewer is unaware of what might be hidden underneath the water or behind the trees. However, I wanted to make the image appear distorted and less steady, as

though from a dream. I proceeded to reprint the same image (as below on the right) by twirling the photosensitive paper around with an inward motion to it's centre, whilst exposing it under the enlarger, which made the image appear like a hallucination as though falling down the rabbit hole. The image has lots of circular lines all around which in my opinion imitate the way a lot of horror movies are filmed — by rotating the camera to make the view spin around. The dark over-exposure, lonely setting, and tunnel-vision perspective make the image even spookier as the viewer is uncertain of what is happening on the photograph.

These photographs were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using an analog camera

Besides the illumination used in cinematography for a visual anxiety reaction, colors have a strong emotional and symbolic impact on the viewer. In the movie Suspiria, within the blood-red walls of the Neo-Gothic ballet school of witches, evil incidents occur accompanied by the vibrance of red tones. In color theory, red is one of the three primary colors and happens to be the most saturated one. It is fundamental for the human perception as it is one of the initial colors to be seen once one is born. The original civilization had produced color red through the use of the madder plant root. Additionally, they would experiment with red pigments by compressing and drying an insect called Kermes[11]. Red is typically perceived as either the color of desire or of evil. A heavy lot of such assumptions may derive from red being the color of blood. It was discovered by Australian researchers in 2015 that the color red increases heart rate and blood pressure which may often result in the subject having red cheeks due to the rush of blood[12]. Thus, such physical reaction may connate to why red is

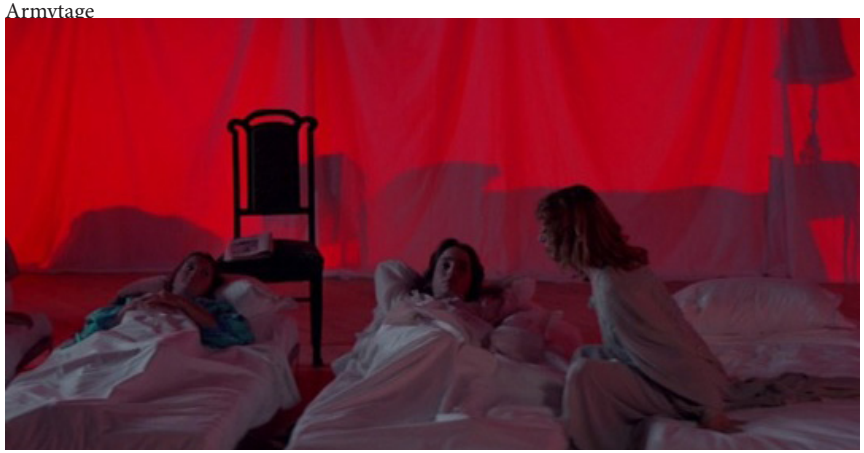
11 What Does the Color Red Mean in Art and Symbolically, by Ardak Kassenova, Zen Art Supplies

12 The influence of color on student emotion, heart rate, and performance in learning

linked with blood other than it's primary appearance. In Islam, a heavy flow of blood is considered to be impure. Shedding blood may also indicate danger, thus blood is generally considered to be disturbing. Increased blood pressure may further result in tinted cheeks due to the emotion of anger, which is negative and threatening. In western culture, the color red has historically been associated with the devil. The devil has always been depicted to be a red man with horns, which underlines why this color may be considered evil. Additionally, red is the international medium of alert. It is used to communicate hazards, starting from stop signs to sirens to stop lights being red as a sign for caution, all around the world[13].

Admitting the fact that the color red tends to hold daunting connotations, I would like to briefly demonstrate how it is presented in Suspiria in order to spark fear in the observer. As it was shot back in the mid-70s, there wasn't much technology available for horror film production. Software for graphic effects was not developed, thus, the director had to stick to the accessible multi-colored technique. Film production was not advanced enough to create visual scares through modern editing such as computer animation, digital composition and imagery, etc. Hence, the director equipped the visual impact with symbolism and associations of natural objects (colors, sounds, light, props). The place of events is always colored in hues all over the spectrum.

environments, February 2015, by Aseel AL-Ayash,Robert T. Kane,Dianne Smith,Paul Green-Armytage



13 Color Theory for Designers, Part 1: The Meaning of Color, May 2021, by Cameron Chapman, Smashing Magazine

The most dominant colors are scarlet reds, greens, yellows, and blues. The background of the scenes is regularly red, which demonstrates the contrast between the plain innocent protagonist and the evil environment she was surrounded by. Red is an indicator of danger, which seems to stay a dominant filter throughout the story as it paints the corridors where the sinister skulks, foreshadowing and alarming the viewer of what expects ahead[14].

The film is produced in psychedelic tones which seems to disturb the view due to it's eye-catching nature of various colors appearing simultaneously. During a scene captured in the bedroom, the prominent object is a peacock lamp which lights a range of colors, distorting the view thereby adding a hallucinatory atmosphere, making the audience feel a sense of uncanny[15]. Therefore, employment of dominant hues like red creates an ominous impression indicating a threat, whilst exploitation of vivid colors concurrently makes the image seem surreal as though in a trance. In the fusion of psychedelic colors, the scene begins to appear chaotic, which is confusing for the viewer as it is a sudden change. Thereby, both factors result in an eerie outcome of the film.

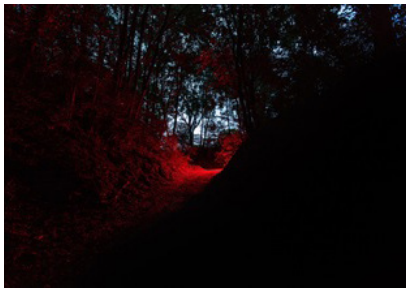
An artist worth mentioning in the current discourse is Simas Lin who is a landscape photographer. He uses artificial light when photographing vacant spaces around the city for a disturbed lonely setting. In his famous project called 'BEEN THERE', he photographs Vilnius in the nighttime, whilst creating a surreal atmosphere with

14 The Meaning of Colours in Dario Argento's "Suspiria" (1977), by Dainéal MacLean

15 5 Iconic Horror Films with Great Color Palettes, October 2020, by DJ Pangburn, Artist Blog

red LED lights illuminating certain passages, like evil glares coming from an unidentified source[16].

In the following images, the fear motive is heavy as the locations shot are completely empty and soulless, but the red lights seem to emerge in hollow pathways. The emptiness is spooky because once you are left alone, no one is around to help in case of an emergency. As discussed red carries sinful connotations and is often linked to the devil in western cultures. With the alleys being illuminated in red, these images remind me of a scene of the gates of hell. The menacing red arises in an abandoned hidden path which reminds the viewer of the pit of hell, the purpose of which is eternal punishment, thus the



given collection of photographs conveys a large trope of horror.

In addition, in relation to the significance of red tones, and the upcoming analysis of contrasting hues, I want to demonstrate the photography of Todd Hido, an award-winning San Francisco-based artist. In his portfolio called 'Homes at Night', he incorporates different color saturations. In the photographs below, we may notice a contrast of two saturations: light blue and red-violet/

16 Simas Lin, 2020

magenta. The blue one taken from the outside of the house seems calm and safe, whilst the red- violet one captured from the inside of a home seems very tense, as colors surrounding red are known to suggest insecurity. The house from the outside is illuminating the view from the windows as all the lights are on, which increases stability by making everything visible, proving that colors and lighting change the perception of the viewer. The house from the inside also attests that red hues may declare danger as we see a chair blocking the entrance, creating the effect that the viewer is hiding from some sort of threat behind the door. Thus, colors and light play an important role in inflicting fear

on the audience.

Furthermore, another way in which colors are used in horror films is contrasting different emotions in correlation with contrary sides of the color wheel. First of all, in 'A Nightmare on Elm Street' 1984, the spirit of the murderer Freddy Krueger is dressed in his distinguished red and green striped sweater. It has been disclosed that Wes Craven (the director of the movie) had chosen these two colors for the villain's costume once he came across an article from Scientific American magazine, which reminded him that green and red are the two colors which are opposite to each other on the color wheel and thereby largely contrast[17]. The human eye experiences difficulties processing these

17 Come To Freddy: 10 Behind-The-Scenes Facts About A Nightmare On Elm Street

two colors together for two possible reasons; the cultural tradition of green signifying movement and red signifying a pause, or the fire of retinal cells in the reaction to color red and passivity to color green[18]. Such dualities cause optic trouble which is why Freddy was assigned a costume of such shades — to cause discomfort within the viewer.

Moreover, Freddy's attire considerably differs from Nancy Thompson's (the leading victim) in it's symbolism. Freddy is dressed in red, which we have established to be deathly, whilst Nancy mainly is in white and pale colors which have always been religiously considered "pure" and "innocent". The distinction between the colors used for each character's wardrobe matters because even the garments may mark the battle of good versus evil, indicating when danger is approaching.

This image is captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova

In response to the research conducted, I experimented with the trope of horror, deriving from the color red. I proceeded to make an experimental photoshoot, photographing my subject in an abandoned old train station. I photographed my model with the slow shutter speed on color film, in order to make the figure distorted and blur sharp lines to create an intangible atmosphere through the unrecognizable shapes. To refer to the disturbing color

(1984), March 2020, by Ben Sherlock, Screen Rant

18 The Smart—and Scientific—Reason Freddy Krueger's Sweater Is Red and Green-Striped, October 2020, by Ellen Gutoskey, Mental Floss

palette, I edited my photos in Adobe Photoshop, adjusting the color balance properties to full red, along with slight blue and green mid-tones.

However, I have discovered that the red tone did not achieve the intended effect and worsened my images as it looked overly unnatural. Therefore, I re-edited my images and turned them black and white, with a red undertone to convey a subtle sense of the unsettling connotations, whilst the under

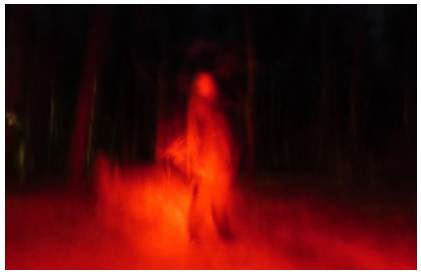
These photographs were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using a digital camera

saturation made the images appear darker, accentuating the motive of fear in addition to the model trying to hide or run away from an undocumented threat.

With respect to the research and experimentation regulated, I advanced to shoot my final piece. I aimed for a soulless location, with no indication of time or man-made constructions, thus, I directed to the forest as it is governed by the rules of nature and is highly unpredictable. According to literature, stemming from fairy tales such as Alice in Wonderland, all sorts of mystical creatures may hide away in the sublime woods, posing threat. In the real world, the woods are just as uncertain as they may disguise the same amount of danger. Considering that a great ton of horror films, such as the Blair Witch Project, are filmed in the forest, I was inspired to carry out my shoot in a homogenous setting, as an

eerie sense is obtained through the loss of control in the wild across nature and darkness, making one vulnerable to the forces within and beyond reality.

I believe my visuals align with the conception of the shoot, manifesting the momentousness of light and color for horror photography and film. The photographs were taken at night, with the dark sky decelerating vision, magnifying uncertainty. The red light conveys evil connotations explored in the study, appearing out of no source in the middle of a sublime space referring



These photographs were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in May 2022 using a digital camera

to an opening of hell. Additionally, it functions to illuminate a distorted figure with no identifiable facial features emerging out of the fog, which seems surreal. Furthermore, the light concentrates mainly on the figure in contrast to the underexposed background, surfacing as

though the subject is on fire, exuding radiant rays which create a theme of the supernatural. Consequently, the composition happens to resemble a paranormal scene of horror through the use of darkness and the color red.

In conclusion, based on a variety of horror films including 'Insidious: The Last Key' (2018), 'Suspiria' (1977), and 'A Nightmare on Elm Street' (1984), supported by the artistic works of Michael Massaia, Simas Lin, and Todd Hido, I am convinced that color and lighting play an important role in conveying the emotion of fear in cinematography. Directors often add cold tones to their lighting in order to make the scene appear cool, like a human body in a moment of fright. Underexposure of the scenery is a prominent feature of horror films as it has been scientifically proven that mankind has an inherent fear of the dark in the form of anxiety. I have attempted to experiment with this notion by editing my film black and white, increasing the intensity of shadows, creating an uneasy eerie atmosphere. The color red dominates a vast number of episodes as it has historical, cultural, and scientific references to impure and dangerous forces. Directors may also blast lots of vibrant colors simultaneously achieving a psychedelic visual effect, which disturbs the pace of the film and causes confusion. Finally, opposite colors can be composed to create visual discomfort. All these components substantially contribute to the trope of horror in cinematography. In my final piece, I have amalgamated such aspects of underexposure, distorted silhouette, and bright red tones to produce the sensation of fear and horror.

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2. A Nightmare on Elm Street, 1984, directed by Wes Craven
3. Suspiria, 1977, directed by Dario Argento

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17. 5 Iconic Horror Films with Great Color Palettes, October 2020, by DJ Pangburn, Artist Blog

18. Simas Lin, 2020

19. Come To Freddy: 10 Behind-The-Scenes Facts About A Nightmare On Elm Street (1984), March 2020, by Ben Sherlock, Screen Rant

20. The Smart—and Scientific—Reason Freddy Krueger's Sweater Is Red and Green-Striped, October 2020, by Ellen Gutoskey, Mental Floss

21. Edith Anderson Feisner and Ron Reed, 2013, Color Studies

22. In Real Life, November 2019, by Olafur Eliasson

23. What Does the Color Red Mean in Art and Symbolically, by Ardak Kassenova, Zen Art Supplies

IMAGES WITHOUT USE OF CAMERA

Angela Easterling is a photographer who creates images of plants without the use of a camera. Her technique is inspired by the early photography of Fox Talbot and influenced by contemporary graphic art.

All photos are dependent upon exposure to light and the sensitized paper. After contact with chemicals, the plants create their own unique tones of colors.

Inspired by Angela Easterling, I attempted to produce my own photogram using plants. I collected different leaves and arranged them on photographic paper under the red light, framing the composition to keep the leaves in place. I then went outside and placed my frame under the sun for an hour allowing my print to get exposed.

17 September 2021
Warsaw, Poland

These images were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova

IMAGING EMOTIONS

PERSONAL STUDIES

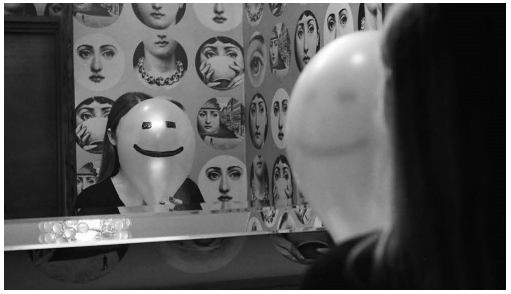
DILARA AKHUNDOVA

02 November 2021

JOY

I photographed these photos on 1/60 shutter speed. I did this because when a photograph is taken on a 50 mm lens, shutter speed slower than 1/125 might make the outcome a bit moved from focus, which is the enigmatic, dark atmosphere I tried to achieve. I decided to photograph my model holding a baloon with a smiley face painted on it, standing infront of a mirror.

There is a duality in this concept because although there is a smile on the baloon which is meant to substitute the face, the models actual face is hidden so the viewer does not see her true reflection. Unlike the joyful baloon, the model might actually be suffering from sadness.



Captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova

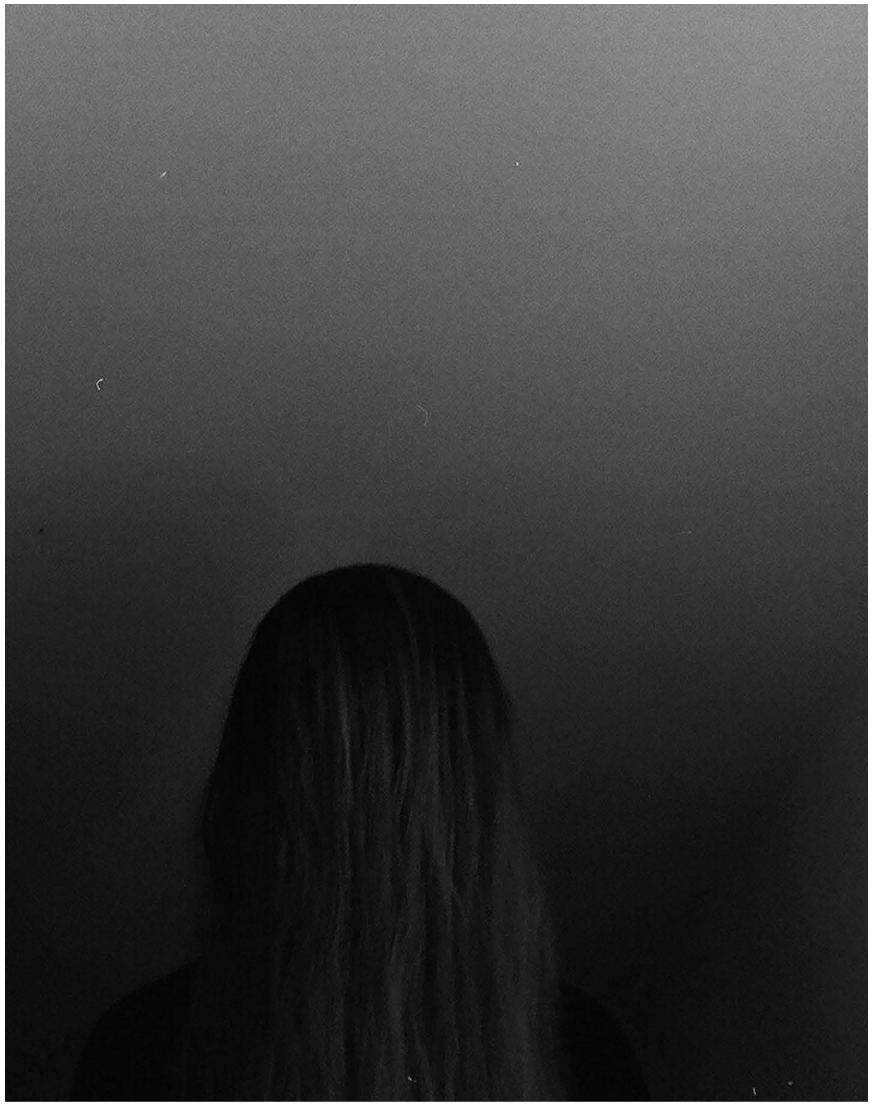
Furthermore, the wallpaper in the room consists of different faces, thus, the viewer doesn't know which reflection represents the true emotion as there are different expressions but the models race remains unseen.

This scene may also be perceived as a response to Andres Muschieni's movie 'It'. 'It' is a horror movie, where clown Pennywise appeals to children by offering them baloons, afterwards he shapeshifts and reveals his true monstrous face.

My model hides behind a joyful baloon so we don't know what's hidden either, that's the duality.

Captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova

EMPTINESS



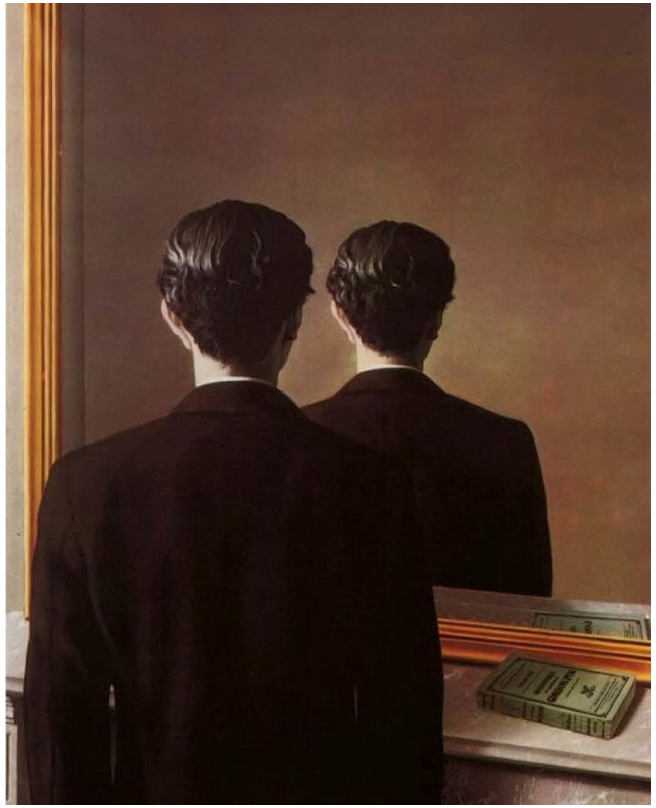
Captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova

Reference: René Magritte

'Not to Be Reproduced',1931 is a painting by the Belgian surrealist René Maurine. It is located in the Museum Boljmans van Beuningen in Rotterdam. In this portrait, the subject is looking in the mirror, but his reflection is not depicted correctly as we see his back instead.

We may notice that the book in the bottom right corner is reflected in the mirror correctly but the man is not.

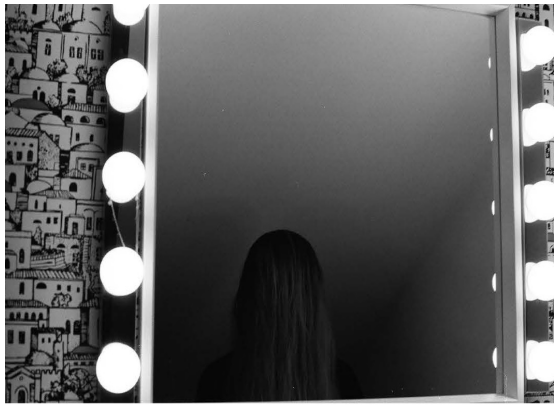
The dimensions of the painting are 81.3 cm x 65 cm.



Imaging Emotions

HORIZONTAL vs VERTICAL

These photos were taken on 1/60 shutter speed. This gave me the outcome which isn't too sharp in terms of focus. Since the concept of the photos is not too straighdorward I didn't want the photos to be too sharp either.



THE MEANING: As the model sits behind a mirror with her hair completelv covering up her face, this photo expresses emptiness and numbness. Since the face is disguised, we dont see her facial expression or any sign of emotion. As there is no reflection of the face, feelings are not present because you can't see any emotions. The model is an emptybody. Looking at both photos side by side, I came to the conclusion that the vertical one did not convev the meaning I wanted it to as it looks more like a hairstvling process than the message I am trving to deliver. In the horizontal photo, there is a dark mysterious one, and the focus moves to the uncanniness and emptiness of the model rather than solely her hair.

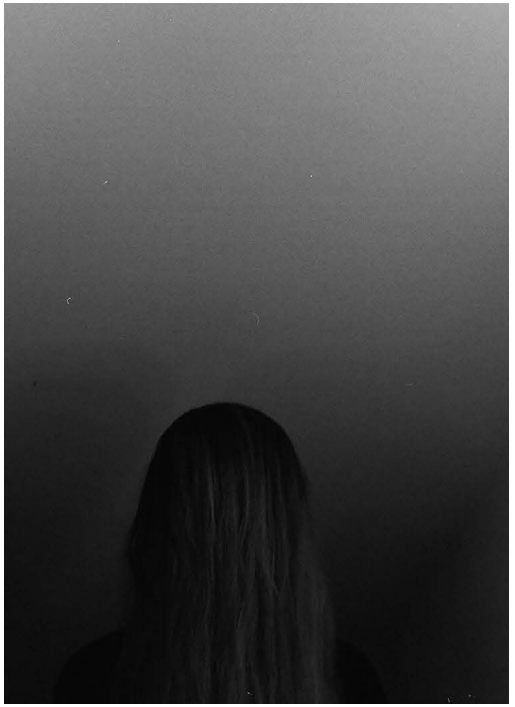
These photographs were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using a digital camera

Imaging Emotions

CROPPING

I came to the conclusion that it is best to cut the sides of the photo because they are distracting. The lights and wallpaper are disturbing the image.

Therefore, I cropped the image into a square with the model looking at herself in the mirror in the dark with no hint of emotions in her reflection. Just a blank, empty figure.



These photographs were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using a digital camera

LONELINESS / FEAR

This photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using a digital camera

Reference: Yves Klein

Yves Klein was a French artist of the 20th century. He was a dominant figure in the French artistic movement of Nouveau realisme, and famous for his performance art. He created art by covering his models in paint, and having them draw on canvases with their painted bodies.

Inspired by the idea of using paint on the body in order to create art, I decided to photograph my model sittig in front of a mirror hiding away from her reflection covered in black paint. She sits alone, terrified to look at her reflection.

Her loneliness and fear is illustrated by the black paint covering her bare back. These negative emotions are staining her body. Just as her reflection is distorted in her own mind, she herself stains her body with darkness as these emotions come from within.

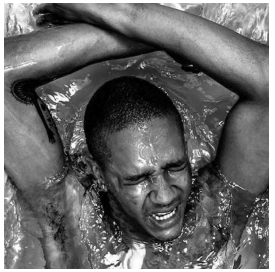
This photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova

Shutter speed: 1/125. Thus, the outcome is rather focused.

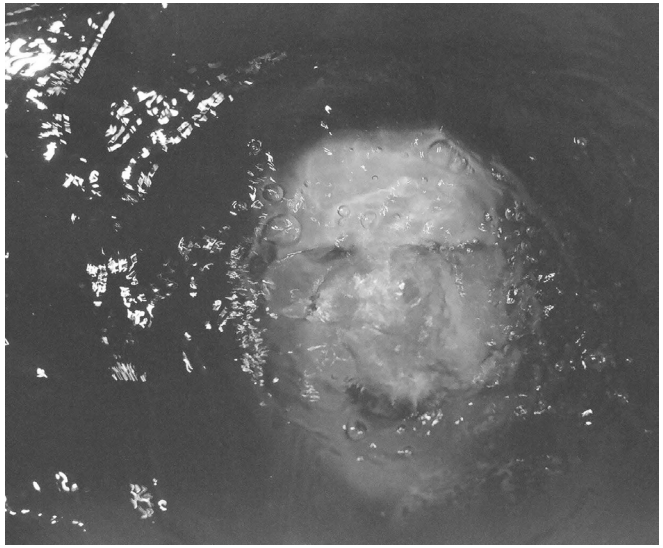
ANGER

Reference: Alban Grosdidier

Alban Grosdidier is a French artist. In his project called 'Drowning', he tried to portray the stress and suffocation people felt when living in big cities. He photographed his subjects underwater.



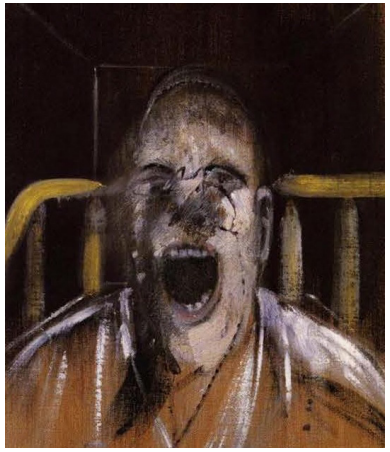
I was greatlv inspired by this idea when photographing my model underwater because I wanted to depict her anger by having her scream underwater, which expressed her rage and feeling of being unheard since water cancels out noise.



This photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using a digital camera

Reference: Francis Bacon

Francis Bacon was a British painter, mastering unsettling imagery. He mainly focused on portraits, human forms, and distortions of firgures.



Study of a Head, 1952

Study of a Head, 1952

In order to express the emotion of anger in my photography better, I decided to ask my model to try and mimic the facial expressions of the subiects on his paintings whilst screaming in the bathtub. Water further helped to distort the face with it's movement.

This photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova

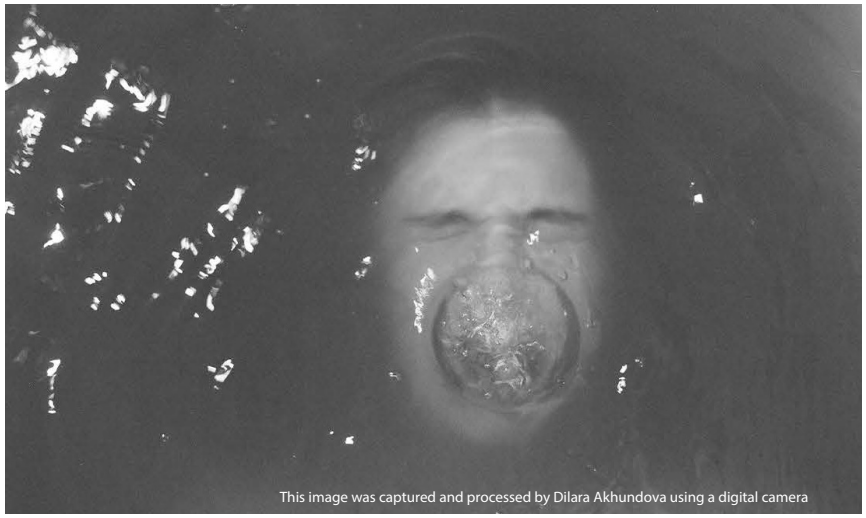
Imaging Emotions

Process : Many Attempts Underwater

Thise images were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using a digital camera

Imaging Emotions

Top Picks



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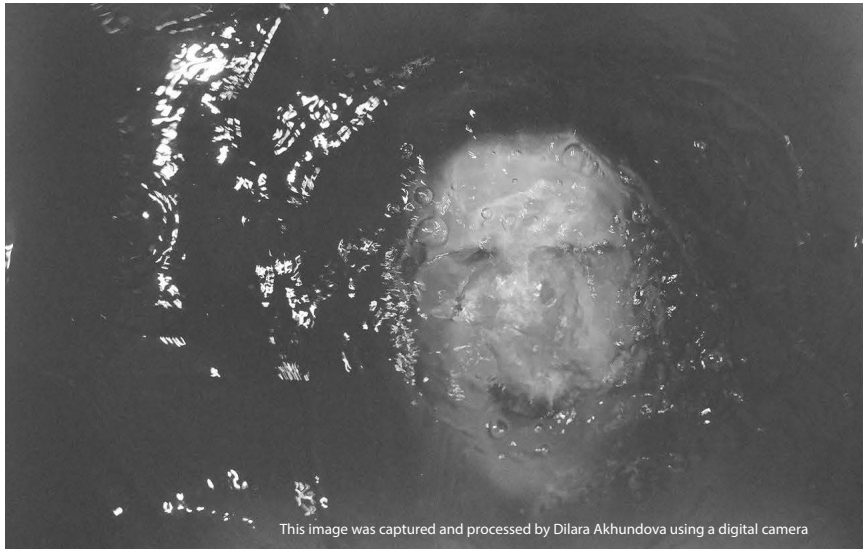

This image was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using a digital camera

Shutter Speed: 1/30 on 50 mm lens, much slower making the images blurrv, adding the distortion of the lace in reference to Francis Bacon

Imaging Emotions

Producing the emotion of anger

1. The water int a bathtub is black as it was mixed with black paint. Since it is not transparant, the viewer doesn't know what waits underneath. Just as when a parson is in rage, no one knows what going on inside their head. The black water adds a sense ol uncertainty and terror since it's all just darknas just as one is when experience extreme anger. You don't know what is behind the darkness when experiencing a burst ol anger.

2. Not only is the water disturbing due to it's tone, but as the model moves and creams underneath, exhailing air, water flows in different diractons as wall with bubbles terming on the surface covering up the model 's face even more. The reflection of light on the water surface makes the bleaks conseal and distort the shape of her lace to an even larger degree. This results are not only representing anger through screaming but also through a deformation of the figure of the subiect leading to a disappearance of her identity due to reflection ot light, shutter speed being so slow it captures the movement of water, and bubbles.

This image was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using a digital camera

These images were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using a digital came

SPECIAL PROJECT

YANARDAG IS MORE THAN A“BURNING MOUNT”

DILARA AKHUNDOVA

2020-2021

This image was taken and processed by Dilara Akhundova in December 2020 using a digital camera

This image was taken and processed by Dilara Akhundova in December 2020 using a digital camera

SYMBOLISM OF FIRE

Passion
Rebirth
Desire
Eternity
Destruction
Hope

It may symbolize anger, punishment, and hell but also signify love, purification, and resurrection (as in the legend of the Phoenix).
All these elements represented in fire may also be associated with dreams, as in our dreams, unconsciously our mind enacts our desires and hopes whilst often also expressing our frustration and guilt. We can be reborn in our dreams in any shape and form which may be both our freedom and limitation.

Dilara Akhundova

"BURNING HILL" - YANARDAG

This image was taken and processed by Dilara Akhundova in December 2020 using a digital camera

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"BURNING HILL" - YANARDAG

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“BURNING HILL” - YANARDAG

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"BURNING HILL" - YANARDAG

This image was taken and processed by Dilara Akhundova in December 2020 using a digital camera

The photograph was captured and processed by
Dilara Akhundova (Warsaw, Poland)

SELECTION OF PHOTOGRAPHIC IMAGERY

DIGITAL AND ANALOG PHOTOGRAPHY BY DILARA AKHUNDOVA

The photograph was captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova using an analog camera

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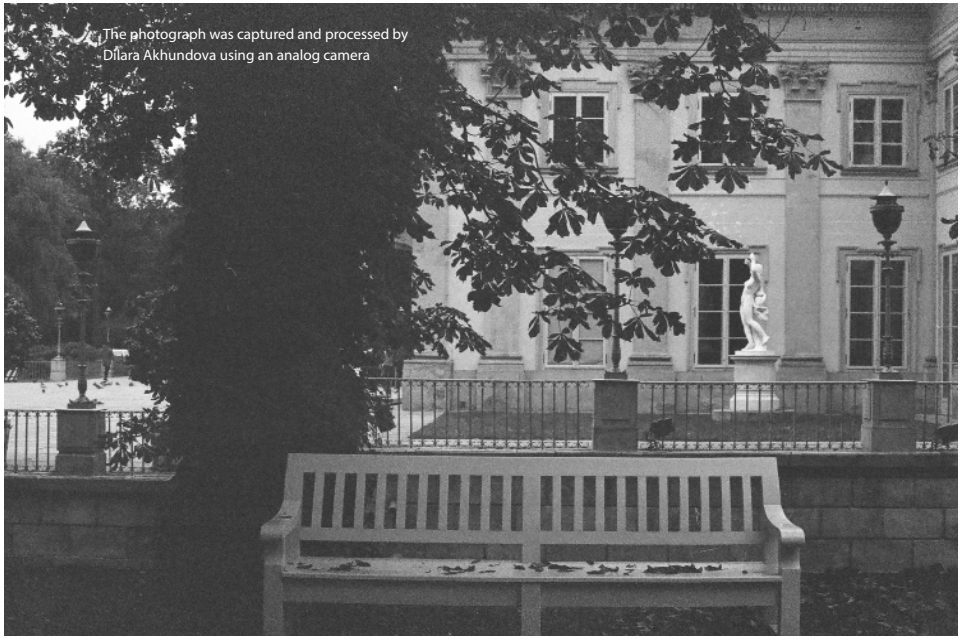

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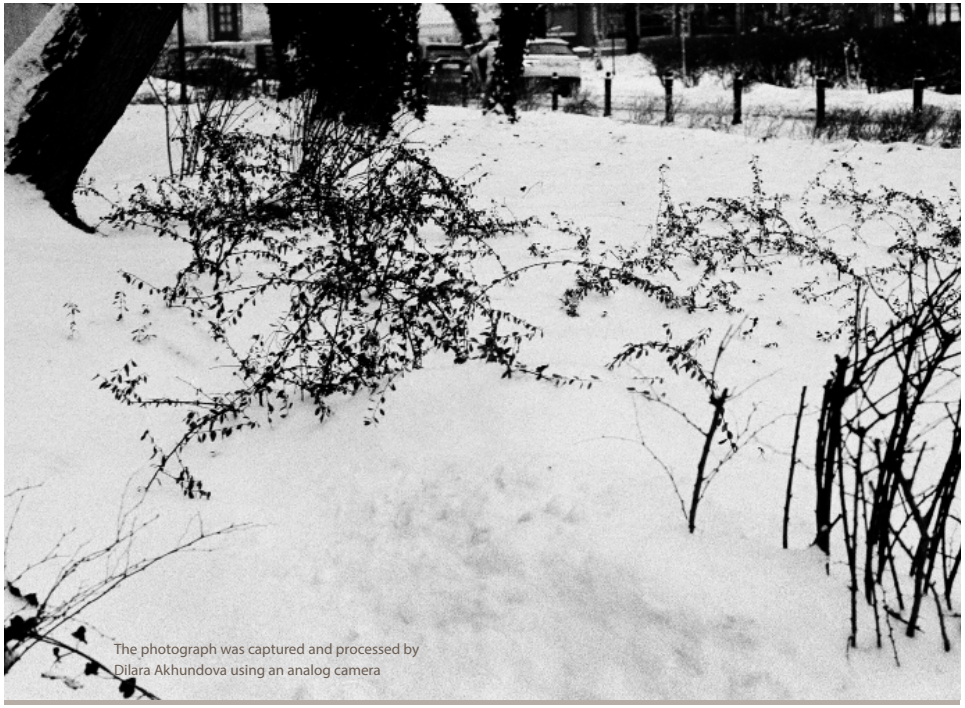

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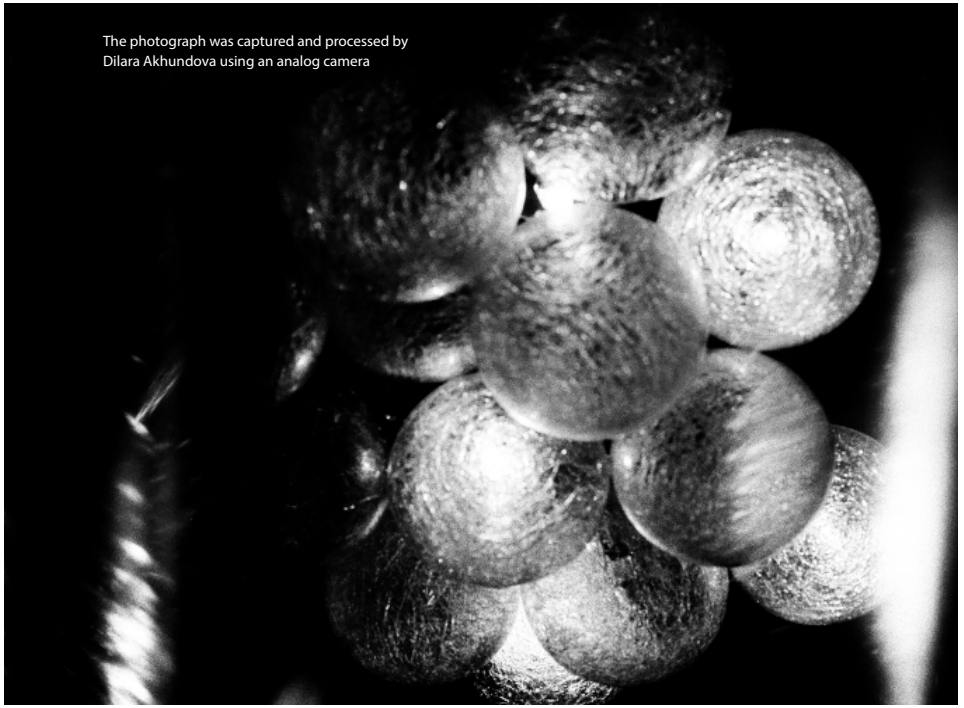

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These images were captured and processed by
Dilara Akhundova using a digital camera

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These images of Warsaw were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in October 2020 using a digital camera

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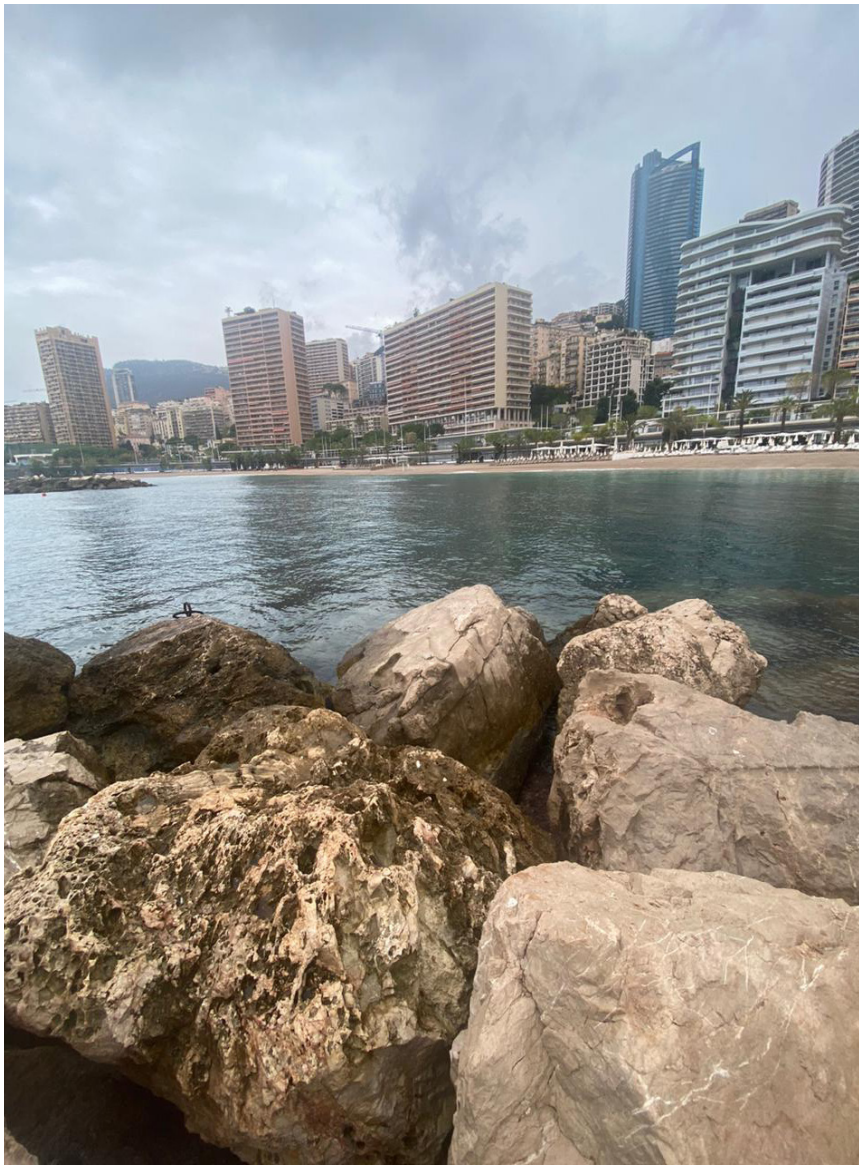
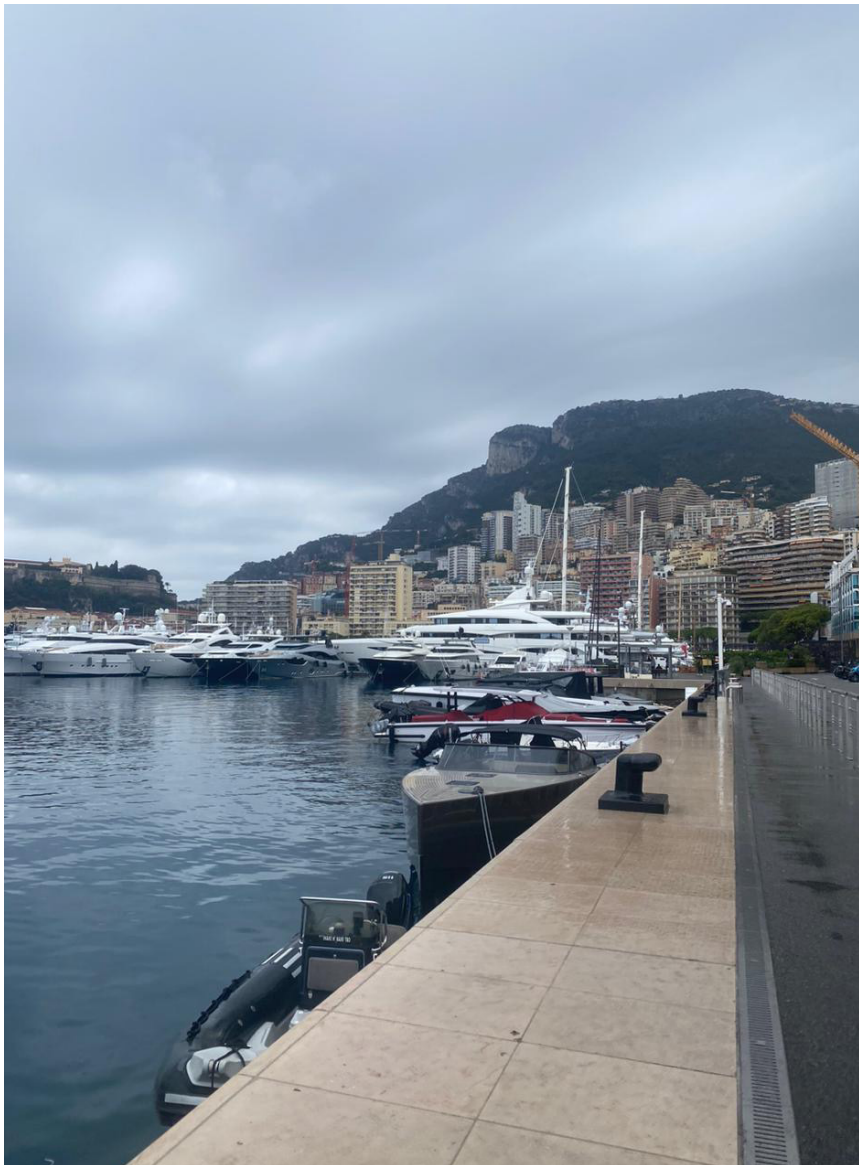
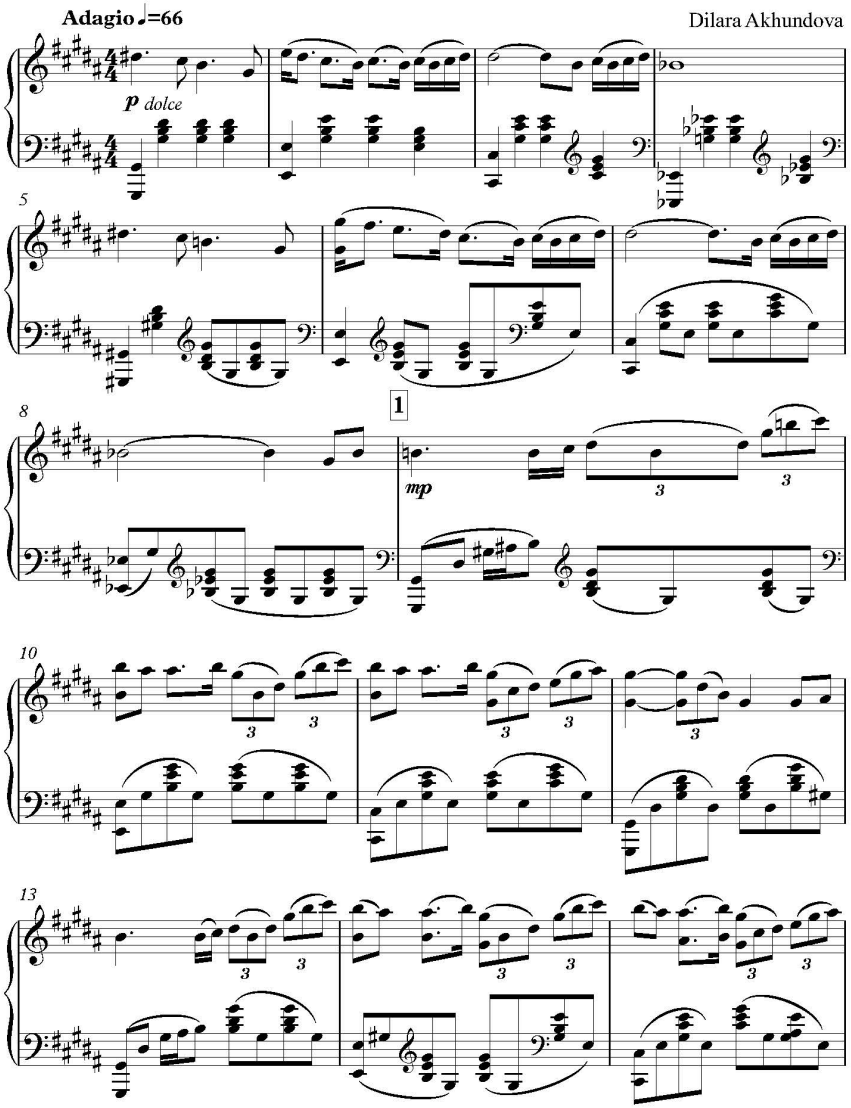


These images were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in Monaco in 2023



These images were captured and processed by Dilara Akhundova in Monaco in 2023

LAST PIECE OF MUSIC COMPOSED

Adagio

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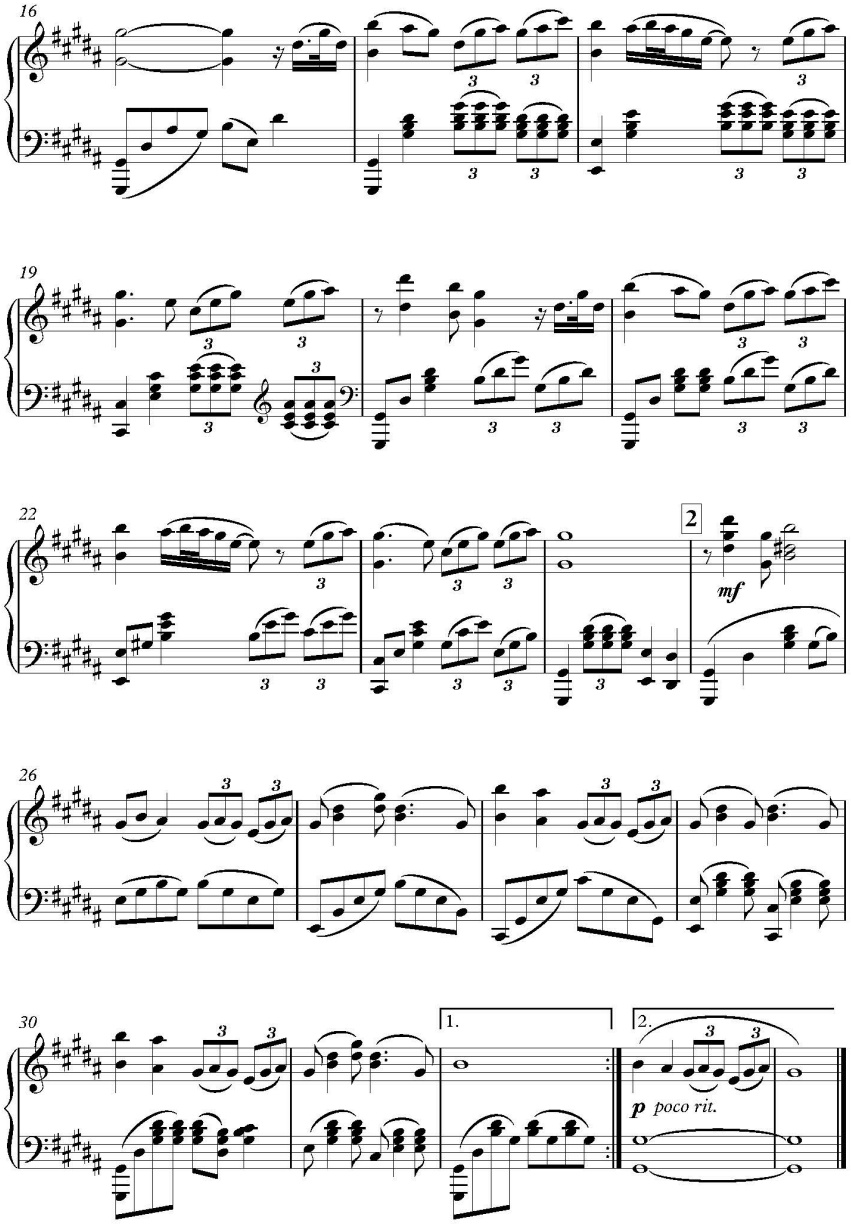
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This publication serves as a compilation of poetry, prose, reflections, and thoughts penned by Dilara Akhundova at various intervals between 2019 and 2023. Additionally, the inclusion of photographic works adds a visual dimension to the collection. Executed over a three-year span, from 2020 to 2022, these photographs were crafted by Dilara during her academic pursuit of the A-Level course titled "Film Band Photography and Digital Photography" at Academeia High School in Warsaw.

All photographic compositions featured in this volume were exclusively shot on film, meticulously developed, and expertly printed utilizing the traditional darkroom method by Dilara Akhundova. This underscores her technical prowess and commitment to the artistic process.

The initiative to compile and publish this book originates from the devoted family members of Dilara Akhundova, a testament to their heartfelt tribute in memory of their cherished daughter. This endeavor seeks to honor Dilara's creative legacy and capture the essence of her literary and visual contributions.

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"Personally, I choose to give my life the meaning of spiritual growth. I believe that our souls are eternal and live millions of lifetimes, with each teaching us new lessons challenging our integrity and advancing our souls under differing circumstances to ameliorate a sense of a well-rounded energetic bloc... "

Dilara Akhundova

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